United Nations A/53/PV.24

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

24th plenary meeting
Thursday, 1 October 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Snoussi (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 118 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/53/345/Add.5)

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): In a letter contained in document A/53/345/Add.5, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in document A/53/345 and addenda 1 to 4, Dominica has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I call on the Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs of the Solomon Islands, His Excellency The Honourable Edmond Andresen.

Mr. Andresen (Solomon Islands): The word "globalization" did not appear in dictionaries of the English language 30 years ago. Globalization is now a reality, but multitudes do not benefit. To assist those peoples suffering its negative consequences, the United Nations requires skilled and innovative leadership. The General Assembly is fortunate that Mr. Opertti has been elected to lead it at its fifty-third session. His service to his country and intergovernmental organizations at the highest levels and his experience as a teacher, scholar and practitioner of international law, with extensive work in economic development and trade, as well as crime prevention and the protection of children, demonstrate the understanding and patience required here.

My delegation applauds the achievements of Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session who time and again demonstrated the dexterity and humour necessary for advancing the delicate process of United Nations reform, which Solomon Islands wholeheartedly supports. In the Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who continues to nurture that process, this Organization has found one of the great men of our time. We are honoured by his presence. Having often spoken strongly in favour of gender equality, my delegation rejoiced in the election of Ms. Louise Frechette as the first Deputy Secretary-General. She and the Secretary-General admirably represent the indispensable Secretariat.

On the eve of the new millennium, many developing countries continue to experience difficult economic,

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environmental and social problems. The lack of capital resources, crushing debt, external economic shocks and the fall in development assistance retard the growth of the economies of many least developed countries. The small island developing States continue to experience growth in drug and other transborder crimes. Moreover, our people face the ever present threat of natural disaster, such as the devastating tsunami that recently struck Papua New Guinea, our nearby neighbour.

We are a village people feeling the impact of globalization. The vulnerability of small island developing States to external economic shock is indeed real. Our tiny economy means a narrow human and non-human resources base and a limited domestic market. We are dangerously exposed to external economic developments in trade, capital flows and technology. Limited in our capacity to stabilize our domestic economy, we are especially sensitive to and dependent on the international situation. Our inability to effectively deal with the impacts of the Asian financial crisis demonstrates our vulnerability. The drop in my country's export revenue further undermines our difficult financial and economic situation. Well-designed and carefully monitored international standards and codes of conduct for capital flows and private financial management are essential. Without such regulatory measures, the prospects that the least developed countries will benefit from globalization and trade liberalization remain bleak. We face even further marginalization.

The Alliance for Change Government of Solomon Islands is well aware that whether we and other least developed countries succeed in effectively using the opportunities and mitigating the risks offered by the new world trading system depends largely on our success in making major macroeconomic policy reforms and overcoming deficiencies. To stimulate private sector involvement and the active participation of indigenous Solomon Islanders, the Government has launched a reform programme incorporating sound banking and financial practices conducive to economic growth and stability. The public sector is being restructured to create more efficient, responsive and accountable governmental administration.

We cannot succeed, however, without significant bilateral and multilateral assistance. The experience of other economies that have undertaken similar programmes shows that the reforms can be accelerated by assured markets for traditional products as well as access to new markets and capital. Moreover, multilateral agencies such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) can assist significantly in enhancing competitiveness and capacity-building.

Communications and information technology are, of course, essential for economic revitalization, especially so for Solomon Islands and other small island developing States remote from major markets and financial centres. My Government is committed to the development of efficient and cost-effective telecommunication networks as a catalyst for economic and social progress. We are also supporting long-distance education by radio and campaigns to reduce and eliminate illiteracy.

Sustainable development and the scientific management of our forest and marine resources remain high priority matters for my Government. The 922 islands and atolls of the Solomons stretch over 1.35 million square kilometres of ocean. Fisheries are essential for our economy. Last April, Parliament enacted legislation to control the exploitation of our fish resources and to maximize the benefits for our people. Protecting the fragile marine ecosystem from pollution is a major concern. With the assistance of the UNDP, a study will soon be undertaken to assess the potential danger to the marine environment posed by the large quantity of submerged ordnance from the Second World War. Projects to encourage ecotourism as well as the processing of forest products within the Solomon Islands are being considered.

The special session of the General Assembly next year to review the overall implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States promises to be an important occasion to assess the progress made in the last five years. Solomon Islands will participate actively in the preparatory work and in the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the donors conference on small island developing States.

Natural disaster remains the greatest environmental threat to the peoples of many small island nations. We face such calamities as tidal waves and volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, droughts and floods and rise of the sea level from climate warming. During the past year, shortages of water and food caused by El Niño severely affected Solomon Islands and several other countries in the region, especially where cyclones had struck earlier. Intensified international cooperation in early warning systems, disaster mitigation and management strategies are needed. We strongly support the renewal of the

United Nations International Decade for Disaster Reduction and related initiatives.

Climate change remains an issue demanding urgent and concrete global collective attention. The Kyoto Protocol, which Solomon Islands signed a few days ago, is a positive step within the climate protection process, but it must be understood to be only one of several. Crucial actions, besides the early ratification of the Protocol by all parties, include the strengthening of emission reduction targets and commitment to agreed time frames by industrialized countries and the development and transfer of appropriate, affordable and environmentally sound technologies. International commitments to energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources remain key objectives. For small island developing States to meet their obligations, adequate resources must be generated through the mechanisms provided by the Protocol and the Global Environment Facility. These are priority issues for the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, meeting in Buenos Aires next month.

Other potential disasters concern us as well. The proliferation of nuclear weapons is especially troubling to my Government. Solomon Islands is committed to the elimination of these weapons and is proud of the part it took at the International Court of Justice on the issue of nuclear weapons. These instruments of terror are creating insecurity in our region. We are also committed to the elimination of biological and chemical weapons. The coming entry into force next March of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is splendid news indeed, and we thank Austria, Canada, Norway and South Africa for their extraordinary efforts.

In our peaceful islands, the noise of any conflict resounds loudly and threateningly. We are indeed pleased by the Bougainville peace agreement, which New Zealand skilfully helped to negotiate with the important assistance of Australia, Fiji and Vanuatu. Crucial for the success of this effort was the willingness of the Government of Papua New Guinea and the other parties to work in good faith. We also thank France for agreeing to a timetable for the independence of New Caledonia.

The Alliance for Change Government strongly condemns international terrorism in any form or manifestation. We deplore in the strongest terms what happened in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam. Solomon Islands supports the call by previous speakers for the international community, in particular the United Nations, to take a leading role in combating terrorism. At the same time, we recognize the need to understand the conditions in which terrorism is rooted and to change them. The desperate acts of men and women have desperate causes.

International partnership is also required in fighting the world's illicit drug trade. The declaration adopted at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly calls for concrete efforts. My Government is taking the necessary steps at the national level, but the enhancement of our interdiction capabilities and the encouragement of alternative economic activities require practical international assistance.

The Solomon Islands delegation participated in the preparation of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, and we applaud its adoption in Rome. The challenge before us now is to ensure its effective implementation.

Half a century after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the progress achieved, although significant, is far from satisfactory for hundreds of millions of people. Many human rights do not exist, except on paper, for the over one billion persons who live in abject poverty. My Government is committed to upholding our people's fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the Solomon Islands Constitution. We strive to maintain human dignity. Although resource constraints hinder our ability to fulfil the reporting obligations of the international instruments to which we are a party, we will not fail to meet our human rights obligations. Nor will we be silent when the rights of others are denied.

We call once again for the representation and participation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the United Nations and its agencies. When the General Assembly refuses to place this matter on its agenda, it denies to the nearly 22 million people of Taiwan their rights under the Charter of this Organization. It rejects the opportunity to foster peace and security in the Taiwan Strait through dialogue here at the United Nations. It turns its back on preventive diplomacy. Surely the General Assembly is better than this. The people of this politically stable, economically strong and technologically advanced democracy have amply demonstrated how much they have to offer their region and the world. With the new millennium nearly upon us, it is time to discard old patterns of thought if the Chinese motherland is to reunite

peacefully. My Government will continue to appeal to the United Nations to seriously consider and recognize the legitimate right of the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to have a voice in this international arena.

During the "reform Assembly", Solomon Islands supported the proposals of the Secretary-General. My delegation actively participated in the Open-ended Working Group on the Security Council. Reform of the Council should move boldly toward greater democracy and transparency. Expansion of its membership must reflect equitable geographical representation, and close thought needs to be given to the composition of the regional groups. If the veto cannot be decently buried, it should be restricted to Chapter VII questions.

The Secretary-General's proposal for a Millennium Assembly in September 2000 to identify priorities for United Nation action is refreshing. Critical for the success of the Assembly will be the two years of international dialogue, involving the widest possible spectrum of participants, leading up to it. The dialogues must truly be dialogues and not long series of monologues in which people talk past one another. A leading candidate for one of the priorities to be adopted by the Millennium Assembly is debt forgiveness for the heavily indebted poor countries. Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom are to be commended for their recent debt-forgiving actions. We also appreciate the Nordic countries who have fulfilled their targets and commitments for official development assistance.

Solomon Islands celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its independence last July. The past two decades have been difficult but peaceful. My Government wishes to acknowledge the contribution of the international community, especially our development partners, including the non-governmental organizations. We especially thank our citizens for their patience and support towards our development endeavours. We are committed to strengthening these partnerships. We must work together to meet the challenges of the next millennium successfully.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on His Excellency Chief Antonio Deinde Fernandez, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Fernandez (Central African Republic): I take pleasure in congratulating Mr. Opertti on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, and I pledge my delegation's full cooperation. I commend his predecessor, Mr. Udovenko, for bringing the fifty-second session of the General Assembly to a successful conclusion. I take great pleasure in expressing my pride in our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. His leadership and many achievements during the short period of his tenure are highly commendable.

Just as this session of the General Assembly coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it also coincides, providentially, with the fiftieth anniversary of the commencement of peacekeeping operations by the United Nations. These coincidences are striking because, while one was envisaged in the Charter of our Organization and was the subject of painstaking negotiations, the other was a chance development, not having been envisaged in the Charter. Yet both have had a profound effect on the influence of the United Nations in global affairs and on the perception of the Organization by those whom it was established to serve and who were identified in the opening words of the Charter as "We the peoples of the United Nations".

The double celebration this year should also enable us to appreciate better the interrelationship between human rights and peacekeeping. There can be no question of human rights being enjoyed in a situation of conflict. Put another way, conflicts create conditions for the most outrageous violations of human rights, since, contrary to all international law and rationality, the most vulnerable in society — children, women and the aged — are often targeted and deprived of the most basic of human rights, the right to life. As we define and refine our Organization's responsibilities in peacekeeping, which, by common consent, is now taken in its broadest sense to mean the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, let us always be conscious that the universal enjoyment of human rights, one of the major aspirations of humanity, cannot and will not be achieved unless we devote as much effort to the elimination of the conditions that provoke the violation of those rights.

I believe that it is with this fact in mind that international organizations, whether global, regional or subregional, have been devoting considerable time to devising effective means of preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in their various area of competence. Of course, the United Nations, with its unique role as the only global Organization invested with authority for the maintenance of international peace and security, is, appropriately, taking the lead in these efforts. Following "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277) and its supplement

(A/50/60), and at the request of the Security Council, the Secretary-General presented to us at this session his report entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa", document A/52/871. The report represents a very comprehensive and incisive study of the causes of conflict in Africa. The recommendations therein, if implemented by African countries as well as by the United Nations, could reverse the pestilence of conflicts which are ravaging the continent.

In this connection, my delegation would like to underscore the role of the Security Council in dealing with African conflicts. While the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has demonstrated a commitment to taking the lead in the resolution of conflicts on the continent, the fact is that its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution will take time and will require resources not immediately available to Africa if it is to evolve to its maximum capacity. In the meantime, the efforts of the subregional organizations, which are increasingly taking the initiative in their various regions, need to be adequately supported by the international community.

My country, the Central African Republic, has been the beneficiary of such an initiative, which was taken by a group of African countries, to deal with the internal conflicts that erupted with three successive army mutinies in 1996. The Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), which was composed of troops from Gabon, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal and Togo, was given strong logistic support by France. It operated in Bangui from January 1997 to April 1998 as both a force of interposition and a guarantor to ensure the observance of the peace accord which was brokered by four African heads of State. My delegation would like to pay very high tribute to the Presidents of Gabon, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Senegal and Togo for the great sacrifice they made in the interests of our continent.

I should also like to pay great tribute to France for its invaluable support of the African initiative. At the request of my head of State, and with the agreement of the inter-African group, the Security Council graciously consented to send a United Nations peacekeeping operation to replace the inter African force.

The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), which commenced operations in Bangui on 15 April 1998, is the first proactive mission established by the United Nations in Africa. It has been making a major contribution to the restoration of lasting peace and security in our country and has assisted the peace-building efforts of the Government and the people of the Central African Republic. It is a practical demonstration of the incisive observation of our Secretary-General, in his report entitled "The causes of conflicts and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa", to the effect that

> "the deployment of a multidisciplinary peacekeeping operation may well represent the best chance to establish peace and build a foundation for lasting development, based on respect for human rights and the rehabilitation of civic institutions." (*A/52/871, para. 37*)

A major step in the restoration of the institutions of State in our country is the organization of a free, fair and transparent legislative election. In his letter to the Secretary-General requesting the assistance of the international community in re-establishing peace and security, my President, Mr. Ange-Félix Patassé, invited the United Nations, *inter alia,* to supervise the legislative and presidential elections in the country. That request was a measure of both the confidence which we have in the United Nations and our commitment to a transparent democracy built on the freely expressed will of our people. I wish therefore to express my Government's satisfaction for the assistance of MINURCA in the preparations for the legislative elections. We are looking forward to the decision of the Security Council which will enable MINURCA to provide further assistance for the electoral process, thus giving all Central Africans the assurance of the freedom, fairness and transparency of this most important aspect of the democratic process.

Needless to say, United Nations assistance in the process is a worthwhile investment in good governance, which itself is the sure foundation for peace, security and development. No effort should therefore be spared by our Organization in rallying to the support of those Member States that are making genuine efforts to instal a system that in itself constitutes a conflict-prevention mechanism. The cost of such support, which also constitutes an investment in peace-building, is in the end much less, and the results more satisfying, than those of a fire-fighting response after the outbreak of a conflict.

Bearing these factors in mind, I wish to appeal, on behalf of my Government, to the Security Council to take a comprehensive approach that avoids a premature exit of MINURCA, thus compromising the objective for which

the Mission was installed in Bangui. My Government has exerted itself to fulfil the commitments made by President Patassé to transparency and accountability in his letter to the Secretary-General requesting the presence of the United Nations in our country.

One major result of those efforts was the positive judgment of the Bretton Woods institutions which permitted the conclusion last July of a long-sought accord on enhanced structural adjustment facility. Needless to say, this would not have been possible without the assurance of security given by the presence and the activities of MINURCA.

However, much remains to be done, and the presence and cooperation of MINURCA will be indispensable for success. Most important is the restructuring and retraining of our security services, both civil and military. The commencement by MINURCA of the retraining of the various categories of our police and gendarmerie services have already yielded some positive results, and the continuation of the programme, as is being done in other United Nations operations in other parts of the world, will prove an invaluable legacy of United Nations peace-building efforts in our country.

Africa should not be denied this benefit which emanates from the reappraisal of the components of comprehensive United Nations peacekeeping operations. Civilian police training programmes have become an essential element of these operations, but they have not been known to commence and end in a period of nine months. An African situation cannot be presumed to be different, particularly when it is in the region now considered to be most prone to the phenomenon of conflicts.

Besides, the restructuring of our armed forces is being commenced with the involvement of MINURCA, which was given a role to play by Security Council resolution 1182 (1998) of 14 July 1998. The joint committee consisting of representatives of the Government and of MINURCA is to elaborate the legal instrument which should form the basis for our defence policy and armed forces, as well as a comprehensive programme for a widely representative, national, and well-trained force that will also be a useful instrument for development. The hope of my Government is that the Security Council will allow MINURCA sufficient time to assist us in these indispensable peace-building endeavours. A withdrawal, as is being contemplated at this time, will not be in the interest of my country or of the Central African subregion, which is already in great turmoil. I cannot but recall once again the very pertinent observation of the Secretary-General in the report which he painstakingly compiled at the request of the Security Council:

> "the deployment of a multidisciplinary peacekeeping operation may well represent the best chance to establish peace and build a foundation for lasting development, based on respect for human rights and the rehabilitation of civic institutions." (ibid.)

The Acting President: (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Fathulla Jameel.

Mr. Jameel (Maldives): Allow me first of all to congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. His election to that high office demonstrates not only the support that Uruguay enjoys in the international arena, but also the confidence and trust that the members of the Assembly have in his ability to guide the work of this session to a successful conclusion. Allow me also to record my delegation's profound gratitude and appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, for the exemplary manner in which he steered the work of the General Assembly throughout the past year.

I would also like to take this opportunity, on behalf of my delegation, to express our sincere thanks and admiration to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his untiring work and dedication in promoting the cause of this Organization. The Secretary-General deserves every assistance and cooperation from all the States Members of the Organization in his endeavours to fulfil the enormous responsibilities that we have placed upon his shoulders in achieving the goals of the United Nations in a world full of political unrest, ethnic conflicts and natural disasters.

From the forest fires in South-East Asia, Europe and North America to the horrendous floods and droughts in Asia, Africa and the Americas, we have been witnessing a drastic increase in the number of natural disasters occurring in various regions of the world with immense loss to human life and property. The excessive effects of the environmental phenomena known as El Niño and La Niña are sweeping across four continents with deadly consequences. Record-breaking temperatures around the globe have spared no country. My country also experienced record high temperatures early this year,

bleaching and killing coral reefs and causing enormous imbalance in the ever so fragile ecosystem that surrounds our tiny islands.

The Maldives may be situated outside the cyclone belt; we may have no rivers to flood, volcanoes to erupt or large forests to burn. But my country is as vulnerable to natural disasters as any other. Indeed, for the past decade we have lived with the fear of being slowly engulfed by the rising waters of the mighty Indian Ocean that surrounds us. Our fears have become more alarming since we have seen the death and destruction caused by the tsunami in Papua New Guinea and the devastating floods in Bangladesh. We have been forced to wonder what would happen if such a disaster struck our tiny, low-lying country.

When my President addressed this Assembly on the impending dangers of global warming and sea level rise over a decade ago, the extent of the threat posed by climate change was not yet widely known or accepted. Today we note that the realities of global warming are being acknowledged by scientists and politicians all over the world. However, mere acknowledgement of the danger is not enough. As we have stated repeatedly over the years, if we are to arrest and reverse this lurking threat, we need the unwavering commitment and cooperation of the entire international community. It is important that we fully and urgently implement the commitments that we ourselves have undertaken at various international conferences. In this regard, I urge the international community, and especially the industrialized countries, to honour their commitments without any further delay. My delegation believes that full and unconditional implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is essential for the continued development of those countries. My country, for its part, has done and will continue to do everything that is required of it to contribute to this goal, and we hope that the other Members of this Organization will fulfil their commitments.

Although we were happy with some of the agreements reached at the Kyoto Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change last year, I regret to say that we were not fully satisfied with the achievements there. We accepted the Kyoto Protocol because we felt that it contained some important elements that deserved recognition and implementation, and because it is the best negotiated agreement available at present. In order to demonstrate our firm commitment to the climate change negotiations, we went one step further and signed the Kyoto Protocol as the first signatory State. We call upon all States to become parties to the Protocol and implement the targets specified in it.

In our small island States, the environment and the economy are intertwined very closely. Tourism and fishing are the two dominant economic sectors in the Maldives, and in a number of other small island States as well. For the Maldives, the tourism sector has been the main source of foreign exchange earnings and has accounted for more than 40 per cent of gross domestic product. Effects of global warming such as sea level rise, beach erosion, coral bleaching, increasing stress on coastal ecosystems, salinization of freshwater aquifers and damage to infrastructure from tropical storms are, however, threatening to jeopardize the viability and the long-term sustainability of our tourist industry. Given the limited availability of resources, many small island developing States, including the Maldives, are not in a position to carry the burden of the high cost of environmental protection on their own. Therefore, we are fully convinced that without adequate, new and additional financial resources, transfer of environmentally sound technology on concessional and preferential terms, and provision for human resources development, even the mere survival of our countries will be impossible.

The vulnerability to external factors of the economies of small island developing States, especially the least developed countries among them, is a well-known fact. Globalization, coupled with the ecological fragility of small island developing States, has marginalized those countries from the present multilateral trading system. Exports from least developed countries have grown far more slowly than world trade over the past two decades, resulting in a continued decline in their share of world trade. Market access for least developed countries is becoming narrower. Poverty still remains a stumbling-block in their quest for achieving sustainable social and economic development. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to call upon the major players in the world economy and upon our development partners to pay special attention to assisting small island States and other least developed countries in their efforts to become integrated into the world economy.

When gross domestic product is used as an indicator to determine the developmental status of a country, the small island developing States may appear to be more prosperous than they really are. We believe that the criteria now used by the Committee for Development Policy in identifying least developed countries do not take

into consideration the special circumstances of the small island developing States and their vulnerability.

The Committee has already recommended the graduation of four small island developing States from the list of least developed countries. The Maldives is, unfortunately, one of them. The irony of this is that the economies of these countries are heavily dependent on one or two industries, which may be extremely vulnerable to global economic and environmental changes and other external factors. Moreover, while the Committee itself has identified the obstacles to integration into the global economy and has called for continued official development assistance for least developed countries for at least another 10 years, some of the countries most in need of such assistance have been earmarked for graduation by the year 2000. My delegation feels that it would be grossly unfair to graduate countries from least developed country status unless they are able to sustain the momentum of growth that they have been able to achieve. Furthermore, the criteria which were adopted in 1991 need to be reviewed in the context of the increased pace of globalization during the 1990s. Until such time as a vulnerability index is developed, it would be very imprudent to graduate any small island States.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a major milestone in the promotion and protection of human rights, providing an essential basis for democracy, freedom and justice. Human rights apply without regard to race, gender, creed, age, colour or economic status. But everywhere we look — north, south, east or west — the reality often falls short of the ideal. Therefore, we must redouble our efforts to promote and protect human rights the world over.

The Maldives remains firmly committed to the cause of promotion and protection of human rights. I am happy to report that this year a new Constitution has come into force in the Maldives, providing stronger safeguards for civil liberties and the fundamental rights of the people, and strengthening the foundations and processes of our democracy. We have also been able to achieve remarkable progress in the realization of social, economic and cultural rights of the people through continued economic development and social progress. We believe that democracy, development and peace are essential for the realization of human rights.

The question of reform of the Organization has been on the agenda of the General Assembly for quite some time. Although the process of reform has proved to be a difficult one, my delegation does not wish to see it prolonged, for we believe that its momentum cannot be maintained indefinitely. However, it is important that we remain focused on the central issue of making this Organization ready and capable of delivering the promise of peace, justice and prosperity for all human beings, irrespective of their colour, race, gender or belief, and the promise of providing the means to protect our environment and enjoy our fundamental freedoms. This means that reform should cover the United Nations system in its entirety.

On the specific question of the reform of the Security Council, my delegation appreciates the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. However, we remain concerned about the lack of progress in its proceedings, and are worried about the prevailing difficulties which are preventing an early agreement on this important issue. We remain convinced of the importance of the early and successful conclusion of the efforts to make the Security Council more responsive to and representative of the current world realities in order to make it more effective.

The commitment of the Maldives to arms control, disarmament and international peace and security remains unwavering. We are parties to all major multilateral instruments relating to arms control and disarmament. Since its inception, we have been faithfully and regularly contributing to the international Register of Conventional Arms. We signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) last year and are presently going through the process of ratifying it. This morning we have signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

My delegation is happy to note the considerable progress the international community has made in the field of arms control and disarmament, and commends the bilateral initiatives that have been proved to be so successful. We believe that both bilateral and multilateral approaches must reinforce and complement each other if we are to successfully achieve complete disarmament.

In my delegation's view, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace in various regions of the world is a positive step towards achieving nuclear disarmament. At this juncture, we particularly

stress the importance of the establishment of the proposed nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia, and take this opportunity to call upon all countries in South Asia to exercise maximum restraint and contribute to the realization of this noble objective.

In our quest to make the world a safer place we must not think only of the big Powers and the big bangs. Security is indivisible, whether in terms of geography or range of threat. The continuing scourge of terrorism, which rears its ugly and murderous head all too frequently, is as much the bane of international security today as is the spread of nuclear and other dangerous weapons. That terrorist groups may gain access to such weapons is an alarming thought. For small States the threats posed by terrorists are allied with and magnified by the activities of drug-traffickers, money-launderers and other manifestations of organized crime. That is why we have acceded to many international conventions against terrorism and are actively considering acceding to the remaining conventions.

I would also like to take this opportunity to repeat the appeal made by my President at the historic fiftieth anniversary commemorative session of this body for the signature and early ratification of the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries in order to expedite its entry in to force. My delegation believes that in the face of these threats it is in the interest of the international community to provide adequate safeguards for small States, which are in reality the front-line States against most of these evil deeds.

We are happy to see the establishment of the International Criminal Court. Those who perpetrate war crimes, genocide and other crimes against humanity must not be allowed to cross a border to safety or anonymity. This is why an international court that can systematically prosecute major war criminals wherever they are has to be established. This need has become more urgent in this post-cold-war period, which is characterized by the proliferation of conflicts of unprecedented ferocity. The horrifying crimes against humanity committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and elsewhere cannot be allowed to recur at any time or at any place. The perpetrators of those crimes should be brought to justice. My delegation strongly believes that the ultimate legal guarantee of peace and justice in the world lies in the strength and resolve of the international community and not in the strength and resolve of a single country.

In conclusion, I once again would like to stress the vulnerability of small island developing States. My delegation believes that urgent and immediate action is absolutely necessary to alleviate the difficulties faced by these countries due to environmental degradation. If the present-day predictions for climate change were to come true, the Maldives and many other small island countries would have to face the frightful reality of extinction. Time is running out. Let us do something immediately. Otherwise, we will be no more.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Mesfin (Ethiopia): I should like first of all to extend to Mr. Didier Opertti the Ethiopian delegation's congratulations on his well-deserved unanimous election to preside over the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We are fully confident that under his guidance the work of this session of the General Assembly will meet with resounding success.

I should like also to express our appreciation to the outgoing President for the most effective guidance he provided to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly and for the most valuable contribution he has made in this regard.

We are indeed deeply indebted to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has tried to inject new vitality into the United Nations and who has, under difficult circumstances, continued to make a difference at the helm of the Organization. We appreciate very deeply in particular what the Secretary-General has been doing to ensure that the voices of all those whose viewpoints needed to be heard are heard, and that there is a more effective cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

I wish in this regard to commend him with great satisfaction for what can only be called the historic report he has submitted on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. This report, on which the Secretary-General has deservedly already been congratulated by many, raises all those issues which are vital for the future of Africa and treats them with such frankness and transparency that I can only hope that we will all have the necessary resolve and commitment to follow up its recommendations and ensure their implementation.

We in Africa have made, over the past few years, tremendous efforts to change Africa's image and reality. Despite the apparent slips of the past few months, what has been achieved on our continent since the early 1990s should not be underestimated. This applies both to activities in the economic area as well as to the work for peace and stability on our continent.

The past few years have demonstrated quite vividly how most African countries, including my own, Ethiopia, have shown the necessary determination to create a domestic climate conducive to economic growth and development. There is today hardly any country in Africa which has not acknowledged that the economic future of countries lies in market-based and private-sector-driven economic transformation and which has not taken the appropriate steps to that end. It is indeed gratifying to note that the results, certainly in my own country, have been encouraging.

However, it is hardly disputable that our performance in the economic area has not by any means measured up to our expectations and that it has been far below what is needed to prevent hopelessness and despair on our continent, especially among the younger generation. Although the reasons that provide part of the explanation for this may not be wanting, it is nonetheless very obvious that the well-known limitations we face in international economic cooperation, in particular in the area of trade and in connection with the debt burden, constitute the major impediments to Africa's economic regeneration. Consequently, the Secretary-General has reiterated in his report that there is indeed an urgent need for political will to ensure sustainable growth and development in Africa, not only on our part as Africans but also on the part of the international community as a whole.

In the past few years we in Africa have also made every effort, in particular through subregional organizations, to work for peace and to prevent and contain conflicts. In this regard, the establishment by the OAU of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa has been a major step we have taken, and our achievement on this score over the past few years should not be underestimated.

In our own subregion, we have continued to exert the necessary efforts for peace in the Sudan and to assist the people of Somalia in achieving national reconciliation and establish a broad-based Government and a central authority. In both cases, while success has not been easily won, the efforts we are making have nonetheless continued because of the conviction, including on the part of our partners in the international community, that there is no effective alternative to these efforts carried out at the subregional level through the mechanism of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

But it is very clear that the gains, however small, made over the past few years in the area of peace and security in Africa have been tested very severely in the past few months. Developments in the Great Lakes region, most particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, represent some of the serious sources of concern we have in this regard. Nevertheless, we remain hopeful that a way out of this looming danger in the Great Lakes region will be found based on full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries of the region, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and on the full recognition of the security concerns of all countries of the region.

It is Ethiopia's firm conviction that there is no alternative as a guarantee for peace and amity among States to the scrupulous observance of all of the principles of international law governing inter-State relations.

However, the greatest danger for peace in this connection is not so much the violation of international law per se, but the response by the international community in the face of such violation. When the international community, for whatever reason, fails to respond to aggression and to violations of international law with the required indignation and resolve, then aggressors are sent, wittingly or unwittingly, the message that the principles of international law are not there to underpin the peace and that laws are there to be violated with impunity.

This has been the lesson that we have drawn from one of the major recent disappointments that we have had in the area of peace and security in Africa. I am, of course, referring here to the naked aggression by the State of Eritrea against Ethiopia on 12 May 1998. Despite the efforts by various parties, this aggression continues to portend the outbreak of a full-scale war between the two countries because, on the one hand, of Eritrea's intransigence in insisting that the peaceful resolution of the crisis must be linked to Ethiopia's acceptance of the loss of its sovereignty over a part of its territory and to the consequent appeasement of Eritrea, and, on the other, of the dangerous impression the

international community is conveying: that aggression entails not costs to the aggressor, but rewards.

The aggression committed by the Eritrean regime against Ethiopia is unprecedented in more ways than one. First, it is aggression that was not only unprovoked but was also carried out against a State that, until the day of the aggression, was a true friend of Eritrea — probably the only true friend Eritrea had until that day of infamy when it decided to stab Ethiopia in the back. Secondly, this is an aggression that, paradoxical as it may seem, was designed to impose Eritrea's will and policy on a country that is in no shape or form suited to play second fiddle to Eritrea. It is quite possible that Ethiopia's preoccupation with development and with the fight against poverty over the past several years might have created the wrong impression in the minds of Eritrea's leaders, with their fixation on muscle-flexing and military might.

Conscious of its responsibility not only for its own people but also for peace and the image of our subregion, Ethiopia has exerted and continues to exert the maximum possible effort to ensure the peaceful resolution of this crisis, which was created solely by the Eritrean aggression against Ethiopia and the subsequent occupation of Ethiopian territory. Our full cooperation with the various efforts made in this regard — ranging from the United States-Rwandan facilitation to the ongoing effort by the Organization of African Unity — attests to the maximum amount of self-restraint that Ethiopia has demonstrated under difficult circumstances and in the complete absence of a rational and reasonable partner for peace on the part of Eritrea since the early days of the aggression.

The origin of the crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea is not in any bilateral dispute between the two countries; rather it is the result of aggression — an unprovoked aggression which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law. To many this Eritrean aggression against Ethiopia has been incomprehensible. But to those who, like us, are familiar with the internal Eritrean situation, the behaviour of the Eritrean Government stems directly from the total absence in Eritrea of the normal characteristics of a State. The absolute failure of institutions, the absence of the rule of law and the lack of accountability can explain the aggressive behaviour of the Eritrean leadership towards its neighbours ever since the establishment of Eritrea as an independent State. As a result, these factors also constitute the single most important cause for the current crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The fact that aggression was committed against Ethiopia by Eritrea has been indisputable for some time now. This has been the position and conclusion of all those who have so far tried, under the difficult circumstances posed by Eritrea's obduracy and lack of civility, to make their good offices available as facilitators and as brokers of peace in this conflict. No one who has been intimately involved with these various efforts for peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea would fail to see that Eritrea has never, ever been prepared to give peace a chance. No one who has been close to the efforts made so far to resolve the crisis peacefully would fail to have noted not only the absolute disregard for peace on the part of the Eritrean authorities, but also their attempt to conceal the truth, their lack of transparency and their sheer failure to demonstrate the minimum decency towards all those who have tried to help. Nevertheless, it is indeed regrettable that some, jettisoning their principles, seem to have drawn the conclusion that, in the face of the known irrationality bordering on the insane in Eritrea, what needs to be done is to lean on Ethiopia, the victim of the aggression, to compromise on principles and to agree to the appeasement of the aggressor and to reward aggression.

Two things must not be overlooked by the international community with regard to the enormous implications of Eritrea's aggression against Ethiopia for international law and for the future of peace and stability in our subregion. First, it must be recognized that this is precisely a trap laid by the Eritrean authorities in the form of a deliberately designed game of chicken, calculated, these authorities hope, to end with rewarding aggression. Needless to say, Ethiopia refuses to play according to the Eritrean script, and we call upon the international community to take the same resolute stand.

Secondly, it should never be assumed that through appeasement war would be averted and that durable peace can be ensured in our part of the world. Although because of its recent history this part of the world admittedly needs peace most, it cannot be expected to pay any price to avoid war, in particular by accommodating aggressors. Clearly it stands to reason, and history has amply demonstrated, that war in the long run cannot be averted by appeasing aggressors.

It is a total illusion to believe that Eritrea will be tamed, and we are saying this from experience. One just has to look at Eritrea's track record of the past few years in our area. Eritrea's propensity to aggression manifested itself first in its belligerent attitude towards its neighbours

over the past seven years and has culminated in its most extreme form of aggression against Ethiopia. In the face of such a destructive attitude one may ask why such belligerence by Eritrea was tolerated for so long. The answer is that, since we believed that the transition from leading a liberation movement to running an independent State would take time, we somehow entertained the hope that the Eritrean leadership would mature over time, as is the case in almost all other similar circumstances. But our hopes were finally dashed on 12 May 1998. In light of this, we have absolutely no doubt that, if we fail to tell the Eritrean authorities in no uncertain terms that their unruly behaviour cannot be tolerated any longer, the result will be even greater instability and interminable conflict in the subregion, and it will have enormous implications for peace and stability in our continent.

That is why the Ethiopian Government and people firmly believe that this flagrant violation of international law by a small nation that is totally blinded by arrogance and led astray by a leadership that has concluded that brinkmanship will always pay should not be left unchallenged. On our part, whether the international community stands with us or not on the fundamental principle of preserving international law and resisting aggression, regardless of the consequences, we are prepared to stand alone, if need be on principle as well as for our national dignity.

This, as we all remember, would not be the first time for Ethiopia to be in such a situation. In this connection, one is reminded of Emperor Haile Selassie and the League of Nations following Italian aggression against Ethiopia in 1936. The measure proposed at the time against Italy was the imposition of an oil embargo, which certainly would have been effective in crippling Italian aggression against Ethiopia. Nevertheless, since appeasing Fascist Italy was the preferred option for the great Powers of the time, the proposal was rejected. Instead, in a clear demonstration of injustice unprecedented in the history of inter-State conflicts, an arms embargo was imposed by the League on both the aggressor, Italy, and the victim of aggression, Ethiopia.

As a result we all know, as history has recorded, this dismal failure of the League of Nations to prevent aggression was one of the causes which brought about the demise of the organization and later contributed to the outbreak of the Second World War. It is Ethiopia's hope that this shameful episode will not be repeated by the international community today, although the nature and scale of the challenge Ethiopia is facing today is radically different, and is not comparable to what it faced during those difficult days on the eve of the Second World War.

The United Nations is still grappling with various issues affecting international peace and security around the world. Among these, the situation in Angola is a cause for serious concern to us. The behaviour of UNITA clearly constitutes a dangerous trend which might lead to the derailment of the peace process — namely, the full implementation of the Lusaka Protocol. We urge the United Nations to exert the maximum effort to save the fragile situation in Angola and ensure the establishment of lasting peace and stability in that country.

On the situation in the Middle East, we hope every effort will be exerted towards the full implementation of the Oslo accords, with a view to establishing durable peace in the area.

With regard to the question of Western Sahara, it is our earnest hope that the proposed referendum on the future of the territory will be held as soon as possible to bring about a final and successful settlement of the issue.

As a founding member of this Organization, Ethiopia has always been prepared to contribute to the best of its ability to all efforts designed to make the United Nations and its various organs more effective and more representative. Accordingly, my country attaches great importance to the ongoing exercises aimed, among other things, at reforming and restructuring the Security Council. A satisfactory, fruitful and expeditious outcome of this process is indeed vital for the effectiveness, credibility and, I might add, the enhanced legitimacy of the world body.

For Ethiopia, and for all those who have trust in the efficacy of multilateralism, there is no alternative to the United Nations. The Organization should therefore be protected, and what it stands for — whether in the areas of economic cooperation, disarmament or human rights — should be promoted and fostered with all dedication and commitment. In this endeavour, Ethiopia will continue to be second to none in discharging its responsibilities to the United Nations in this and other activities of the Organization.

I therefore wish to conclude by renewing Ethiopia's commitment to the United Nations and to what it stands for.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jadranko Prlić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Prlić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): It is my privilege and honour to address the fifty-third session of the General Assembly on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At the outset I would like to congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti on his election as President. His well-known skills and experience in international affairs guarantee the wise conduct of this session. Our gratitude goes to the outgoing President, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine.

Just a few days ago the outcome of the recent general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina was made public. We are satisfied with the fact that those important elections, conducted under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), passed practically without incident or disruption. According to the general assessment by the international and local monitors, we had free and fair elections.

A new chapter in the political life of Bosnia and Herzegovina is about to begin. The new Parliament and the new Council of Ministers will have to address without delay a number of issues of vital importance for our country. Indeed, at stake is the destiny of a country with a particular internal structure: three constitutive peoples, two entities and one internationally recognized State. Only through scrupulous respect for equal rights and adequate participation in power by the parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina can we achieve the goal, which has no credible alternative: a modern State based on the rule of law, parliamentary democracy, respect for human rights and a market economy. This will also open the door for integration into European and transatlantic institutions. The most encouraging sign in this direction was the recent Declaration of support by the European Union and the establishment of its Joint Task Force with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is obvious that we in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot do this alone. We must prove to our friends and supporters from around the world that we can be a reliable, responsible partner in this joint project, which in the end should place Bosnia and Herzegovina in the family of democratic States. But it also must be remembered that, inevitably, those in Bosnia and Herzegovina who behave differently or against the rules will not be allowed to participate in this endeavour of crucial importance.

The question about the future of my country is being asked in many quarters of the world. The same question, but certainly with an additional existential and emotional charge, is in the air in Bosnia and Herzegovina itself.

There are no easy answers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, since we are talking here about the future of a very specific country, the possible answer is at the same time both simple and complicated. It is simple because of the fact that whoever holds public office in Bosnia and Herzegovina is obliged to implement the provisions of the Dayton Agreement fully and unconditionally. On the other hand, it is complicated because it will, to a large extent, depend on good political will, a sense of historical responsibility and the determination of each player in the complex State structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina to do so.

Mr. Baudin (Senegal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Almost three years after the signing of the Peace Agreement, the consolidation of peace and the reconstruction process in Bosnia and Herzegovina is entering a new stage. From the very beginning, the military component was implemented well and an environment of overall security was created. Thus, we were able to focus our energy on the civilian aspects of the Agreement, which proved to be extremely complex. We went through the rough waters of various obstacles, mistrust, misunderstanding and obstruction. But it was also a time of the first signs of confidence-building and the establishment of the necessary foundation for a healthy partnership.

In spite of the often justified criticism regarding the pace of progress, one must recall some of the important positive steps that have been made: one flag, a common currency, common license plates, common passports, generally improved freedom of movement and significant reconstruction results. On the other hand, the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes of origin, the proper functioning of State institutions, an independent judicial system, and the uniform protection of human rights still represent major problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Therefore, with the elections behind us, the renewed political resolve and energy must be applied to finding a solution to all the aforementioned issues. A multi-ethnic, multicultural Bosnia and Herzegovina within both its entities, in which mutual respect, equality and

cooperation among the constitutive peoples and different ethnic groups are shared assets, will be the best answer to superficial theories on the inevitable clashes between different cultures and civilizations.

The continued presence of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina is certainly needed. Without the generous help and support it has extended so far, little would have been achieved. The United Nations and its specialized agencies stand high among those that are doing their best to help Bosnia and Herzegovina overcome its problems. But the time has come to consider that one future path may lie in changing the donor-recipient relationship into a concrete, project-oriented joint venture, in which local companies and infrastructure could have a more substantial participation.

This would no doubt contribute to the faster economic rehabilitation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to reaching the level of self-sustainable growth. Better economic prospects will certainly enhance our ability to overcome many existing obstacles and to achieve the overall stability of the country; and the ultimate goal of handing over the business of running the country to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be better served.

At a more global level, this is the way for Bosnia and Herzegovina to become a factor for stability in the region and an active partner in building security architecture on the continent. As has already been mentioned, we in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot do this alone. But, hand in hand with the international community, we can all continue our journey into the next millennium with more hope and better prospects.

In less than two years, the century — full of achievements and unbelievable technological progress, but also a period of two world wars and a number of smaller but no less tragic conflicts — will be over. We are stepping into a new millennium with a lot of expectations, but also with heavy baggage.

Here, I would be morally and politically reckless if I did not highlight the tragic and increasingly alarming situation in the Kosovo region of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Events there certainly have a contaminating effect on Bosnia and Herzegovina, at least psychologically. However, the situation is in itself worthy of our great consideration and engagement, regardless of its impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina or beyond.

Lessons must have been learned from the international treatment Bosnia and Herzegovina received during our recent crisis. Decisiveness, urgency and the proper combination of tools and remedies available to the key factors must all be there in order for us to achieve a speedy and proper solution. The human, national and democratic rights of all the parties must be taken into consideration, as must the territorial integrity of all States in the region. No matter how we get there, all lasting solutions end with a political settlement — one which all the parties need to abide by, if not always enthusiastically support. We are there to help in any way we can and the active support of us all will be necessary.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other hand, has tried to learn from its recent past. When you have to pay a high price for a lesson, you also learn well. Among other steps, Bosnia and Herzegovina has ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We now need to continue our efforts to decontaminate the ground, and the assistance of the international community is also essential in this endeavour.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's experience was also critical to the recent adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court in Rome. We played a vital and active role in Rome, since we are convinced that justice and reconciliation, legality and peace, are intertwined. The new Court should take into consideration the experiences of the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, whose impact on lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina is critical.

We in Bosnia and Herzegovina are convinced that those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law should be brought to justice, regardless of the ethnicity of the victims or perpetrators. We have a direct and decisive interest in securing compliance by all signatories, and all others who are obligated, with all their commitments under the peace Agreement, including full compliance with the International Tribunal.

One thing we can be proud of is our universal Organization, the United Nations, which, throughout this time, has been the main vehicle for promoting peace, cooperation and development on our planet. In the face of new challenges, we would like to see the United Nations even more efficient and instrumental in dealing with a number of global issues.

The struggle against terrorism, illegal arms and drug-trafficking and violations of human rights is in the forefront of our common agenda for a better future. The role of a dynamic, effective, well-focused United Nations is indispensable in that respect.

This year, we are also celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thanks to that document and to the tireless activities of people around the world, human rights have become a genuine global issue, and ensuring their respect and protection is one of the most important ongoing tasks of the international community.

The end of this millennium in human history has witnessed a growing number of massive humanitarian emergencies. We need to draw conclusions from them because the flagrant violation of human rights and humanitarian law and the barbaric acts of savagery that we have witnessed in various parts of the globe in recent years are an affront to our common humanity.

Based on our own experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have learned lessons that we must share with the international community as a part of our humanitarian duty. We owe it to ourselves and to our children. That is why my Government intends to propose for the favourable consideration of this Assembly a set of basic tenets of humanitarian action in emergency situations. The purpose is neither to duplicate nor to downgrade the ongoing efforts, but rather to supplement what exists and to enhance awareness of the need to adjust international norms and practices to new realities. We trust that all Member States will join us in this effort so that, together, we are able to contribute to the development of a new international humanitarian order.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Stein Barillas.

Mr. Stein Barillas (Guatemala) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Omar Aguirre, of Bolivia; Lisa Malone, of Australia; Pablo Gorga, of Uruguay; Luis Escoto, of Spain; Pedro Ruz, of Chile; together with Guatemalans Rolando Palacios and Celso Martínez, all of them United Nations personnel stationed in Guatemala to collaborate in the verification of the peace agreements, gave their lives in carrying out their mission, when they died in a tragic air accident, on 17 March 1998, as they were travelling to a remote area to perform their duties. With the Assembly's permission, I would like to pay a sincere tribute to those who, at a time of peace, generously gave their lives for peace in Guatemala.

Equally moved by the destruction left by hurricane Georges in its passage through the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and other Caribbean territories and the southern United States, I wish to express the solidarity of the people and the Government of Guatemala with those who suffered economic losses and the inconsolable pain of the loss of human lives.

Guatemala feels honoured to welcome Mr. Opertti to the roster of eminent persons who have had the privileged responsibility of conducting the debates of this forum throughout its existence. His election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, while showing recognition of his great diplomatic talent, is the natural result of the efforts that he and his country have made in promoting understanding among the peoples and the nations of the world.

We are fully convinced that our Organization will benefit from his ample experience as one of the supporters of the principles of the inter-American system. This guarantees that the excellent work of his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, will be continued, and we wish to express our appreciation for the excellent manner in which he conducted the work of the General Assembly during the year of his mandate.

This is the second time that Guatemala has addressed the General Assembly since the signature of the peace agreements that put an end to the fratricidal struggle that senselessly tore our nation apart for almost four decades. I must again acknowledge the solidarity the international community showed throughout the process, especially during the difficult and protracted task of implementing the accords, which will lead us to the reconstruction of our society and the fulfilment of our highest aspirations for economic development, equity and justice.

The United Nations and the Government and the people of Guatemala have worked together in the implementation of the peace agreements. Under the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) we have gone forward with firm and sure steps in complying with the accords, and it is with great satisfaction that I can report to the Assembly that the timetable of the accords is being met with sure progress.

That is why we welcome the recent report of the Secretary-General on the status of verification of the peace agreements in Guatemala (A/53/288), and we strongly support his recommendation that the General Assembly authorize the renewal of MINUGUA's mandate until 31 December 1999.

As a Member of an Organization whose main objective is to preserve peace among nations, our own experience of living in peace leads us to reaffirm our belief in multilateralism as a genuine form of pooling efforts for coexistence among the peoples of the world. To the ordinary citizen of Guatemala, regional organizations, sister nations and international commitments are no longer regarded as abstractions, instead becoming elements of our reality which, added to our political and cultural experience, is producing a new synthesis of the local with the global. That new synthesis in Guatemala means peace, which is rooted in the happy conjunction of the ancestral pacifism of our own ancient cultures with the universally accepted ethical values promoted in the various centres of multilateral convergence, both regionally and globally.

These positive results have also been factors in accelerating our involvement in regional cooperation initiatives, especially in the process of Central American integration, in which Guatemala, determined to achieve it, has made significant efforts, motivated by the view shared by the other actors in the process that a united Central America will be much more capable of facing the challenges of globalization for the benefit of our peoples.

Believing also that the centres of multilateral administration are fundamental to promoting peace and development, we have been motivated to participate actively in the tasks of consolidating the work of the Association of Caribbean States, an organization of 25 member States sharing the Caribbean Sea as their common heritage and having the most varied cultural and linguistic traditions. This Association has decided to unite in order to explore the regional potential for promoting conditions that will improve the living standards of their citizens.

We do not have time to continue listing the various regional integration initiatives. However, they exemplify the importance that Guatemala attaches to multilateral bodies in efforts to coexist under conditions of justice and equality and in an environment which is increasingly interactive and interdependent. The global condition of the contemporary world is no longer expressed recurrently through periodic events, but is rather a daily constant that, every minute, concerns all individuals on the planet. It poses challenges that may be regarded as either opportunities or threats and that elicit a full spectrum of responses, from naive enthusiasm to irrational fundamentalist resistance.

That is why multilateral administration requires renewed, flexible and participatory institutions that respond to the dynamic conditions derived from the development of international relations in the post-cold-war era. Thus, Guatemala has followed with interest modernization efforts within this Organization. We have enthusiastically assumed the responsibility of contributing to the implementation of administrative reforms through a pilot project.

We are pleased at the progress that has been made in this area, and we would like to express once again our appreciation for the support we have received from the agencies of the United Nations system, which, under the coordination of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), are helping us with the process of peace and development and making system-wide reform a reality in our country.

The work undertaken by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in response to the concerns of Member States regarding the modernization of our Organization deserves our very special recognition. Last July, the Secretary-General honoured us with a visit to Guatemala, and we saw for ourselves the determination and commitment he demands of himself in order to strengthen our Organization and the clear vision of the future that guides his efforts towards the new millennium.

Guatemala agrees with other Members on the need to continue the deliberations on the reform of the Security Council. We have studied with interest the various proposals that have been presented, and we hope that despite the differences in their current positions, Member States will be able to reach the necessary level of agreement and understanding in order to bring about a reform that is equitable for all regions and that demonstrates the democratic will that should prevail in the Organization.

I must emphasize the important role that the United Nations must play in the creation, codification and application of the norms of international law. A greater involvement by the Organization in this matter would promote greater creativity on the part of Member States in confronting shared problems and would eliminate legal ambiguities that could enable national legislatures to

dictate international laws which would then be imposed on less developed countries. We call upon the community of nations to redouble its efforts in this area.

At the threshold of the new millennium, and in response to an international society that is increasingly interdependent, we call for a more equitable and just order in the sphere of trade, with clear rules and equal opportunities for all regions and States. This is the only way to promote development in areas where there is an imperative need to eliminate poverty and build more just societies.

As the President of Colombia expressed very well in this Assembly, development should take into account the human side of our societies. We must keep striving to accomplish more internal equity in the distribution of resources and burdens. But it is increasingly difficult, under present conditions, to comply with the demands of the international institutions that finance development, without sacrificing the lives of our people, who are already, for the most part, mired in poverty. We are also greatly alarmed to see an insecure and uncertain worldwide economic situation in which dubious speculative practices continue to wreak havoc in the absence of effective controls by those responsible. The world is filling up with products that populations and countries no longer have the means to acquire, and there is no longer any place for our small economies.

Now that the Central American countries are making efforts on various fronts to accomplish our integration and liberalize our economies, and as we strive to leave years of armed confrontation behind us and adapt to the demands of the world market, our products must have fair, non-discriminatory access to world markets, and our potential as a competitive destination for productive investment must be recognized.

One of the most important subjects on the agenda of the General Assembly is that of disarmament. Guatemala, together with the other Central American countries, condemns any type of nuclear testing. We expressed our concern over the recent tests carried out in other continents. Such activities do not contribute to the peace or the nuclear disarmament that most of the Member States of this Organization desire.

Guatemala was also among the first countries to sign the Ottawa Convention prohibiting the manufacture and use of anti-personnel mines. We ask those countries that have not yet done so to become parties to this Convention.

We also note with great satisfaction that the concerns of Member States relating to the subject of weapons are growing in scope to include the proliferation, illegal traffic and abuse of small arms. Guatemala is extremely interested in the quest for a solution to this problem, and we believe that the Oslo platform can generate satisfactory responses.

We are extremely concerned to see that although to a large extent it has been possible to overcome internal conflicts in most Member States, the international community continues to be shocked by such horrendous acts of international terrorism as those that recently caused much bloodshed in Africa and Northern Ireland. In addition to condemning and unanimously rejecting these vile and cowardly actions that primarily affect innocent human beings who have nothing to do with the causes that are invoked, the international community must observe the resolution of the Rome Conference on the Statute of the International Criminal Court to the effect that

> "terrorist acts, by whomever and wherever perpetrated and whatever their forms, methods or motives, are serious crimes of concern to the international community". *(A/Conf.183/10, annex I, section E, second paragraph)*

As is well known, Guatemala was one of the last staging grounds of the cold war, where transnational networks operated with impunity in support of the dirty war taking place inside and outside of the country. We wish to express once again our firm and emphatic political resolve that never again will our territory be used to prepare any type of aggression against any other country.

As the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights draws near, Guatemala reaffirms its resolute commitment to honouring the principles contained in the Declaration. One of the most important tasks of the Government of President Alvaro Arzú has been to promote fulfilment of and respect for human rights in all aspects of life in our country. The human rights dimension has been integrated into all spheres of civic life, and, although we still have much to do in that area, we have certainly made great progress, promoting the full blossoming of our rich ethnic, multicultural and multilingual diversity.

The United Nations, founded in 1945 on the ideal of keeping peace in the world and with the fundamental role

of ensuring that all nations can coexist on the basis of mutual respect among States, is the highest expression of representation by all peoples. However, 53 years after the birth of the United Nations, there are still territories whose citizens are not represented here. My country is aware of the divisions that persist between brothers in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. We hope that their differences can be resolved through dialogue and in a peaceful manner, so that, without any form of rejection or discrimination, all the peoples of the world may be represented in the United Nations.

I wish to mention in particular the situation of the 22 million citizens of the Republic of China on Taiwan, as well as the importance and soundness of their economy amid so much financial uncertainty in that region.

Our Organization must face great challenges as the new century draws near. We hope that, with the goodwill of all Member States, we can resolutely embark on it so as to ensure the survival of the human race, as well as lives lived in peace, the protection of our environment, economic growth and sustainable development. Only in that way will we achieve the dream of those who, full of ideals, founded the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the Chairman of the delegation of Grenada, His Excellency Mr. Robert Millette, on whom I now call.

Mr. Millette (Grenada): My delegation congratulates the Secretary-General and his staff on their efforts to make the United Nations more responsive to the needs of Member States and of the international community, especially the developing nations.

My delegation also wishes to congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. We also wish to thank Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, the former Foreign Minister of Ukraine, for his exceptional performance in the conduct of the proceedings of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

The philosopher Thomas Aquinas admonished us thus:

> "It is better to light up than merely to shine; to deliver unto others contemplated truths, than simply to contemplate."

In the context of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in obedience to that admonition by Aquinas, the Grenada delegation humbly offers to this noble Assembly, for its reflection, a few contemplated truths in relation to human interaction within individual societies, as well as among nations.

In his *Lines Written in Early Spring*, the poet William Wordsworth wrote:

> "I heard a thousand blended notes,
> While in a grove I sat reclined,
> In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
> Bring sad thoughts to the mind.
>
> "To her fair works did nature link
> The human soul that through me ran;
> And much it grieved my heart to think
> What man has made of man."

In book I of *The Republic*, Plato made the observation that

> "Mankind censure injustice fearing that they may be the victims of it, and not because they shrink from committing it."

And Michael de Jouvenal, in his foreword to a twentieth century work on the history of the disintegration of ancient Greece, urges that

> "we study history to learn from history, to acquire political prudence".

The ideal of peace among the nations of our world has twice during the course of this century inspired the institution of a body to moderate, if not regulate, international interaction. Regrettably, with respect to both of those initiatives, the focus was on the avoidance of war and not on the concept of peace, so insightfully adumbrated by Aquinas as the tranquillity of order.

The League of Nations collapsed ignominiously. It perished for lack of honour. It was unfaithful to even the rather limited principles upon which it had been founded. The weak were sacrificed on the altar of expediency, in veneration of military might. So ended the first attempt at seeking to realize international peace through the pursuit of avoiding war. Continued appeasement and non-involvement then spawned the Second World War.

Yet, following the horrors of the Second World War, which prompted the setting up of the United Nations, the late Winston Churchill, in persuading the British people and, indeed, the rest of the world, to join in the second attempt to pursue peace among nations, advised that

"To jaw-jaw is better than to war-war".

History records that we have not succeeded in avoiding war.

As we in the Assembly engage in the observation of events among nations, as well as within them, the Grenada delegation sincerely and humbly suggests that we should reflect on the question of why we have not examined relevant history to acquire the relevant political prudence?

Can it be that there still exists among us a predominating subscription to the notion that might is right? Or is it that there remains an overriding precept which determines the operations of the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies: that wealth necessarily merits the enjoyment of special privileges — albeit to the significant disadvantage of the less wealthy, and especially the poor?

Can it be that such a precept continues to inform perceptions as to what is truly acceptable in relation to the composition of the Security Council and the veto?

History attests to the human experience across the entire spectrum, in the context of the *Pax Romana* as well as the rule of recent empires.

When will we acquire the political prudence to order human interaction, within and among nations, so that the resulting tranquillity will ensure that peace will prevail in our world?

It is with deep humility that Grenada suggests that peace among men and among nations will be realized only when human rights are truly respected and honoured universally. Indeed, Grenada submits that the several human rights which have been individually identified may all be encapsulated within a single enunciation: the right to the realization of the fullness of human dignity on the part of every person.

In this regard, Grenada expresses concern about the fate of the Kuwaiti prisoners whose human rights are being violated as we speak.

Prominent among the causes of erosion of human dignity are poverty and deprivation in relation to the prerequisites for the sustaining of life. In this regard, physical disablement warrants particular inclusion as a significant cause of erosion of human dignity.

Accordingly, Grenada supports unequivocally the call for the eradication of poverty from our world and urges that this objective be pursued as a matter of urgency. Grenada expresses deep concern over the sanctioning by the United Nations of trade embargoes which include food and medicines. Grenada humbly urges that this kind of mandate be speedily revisited. As to maiming injury, Grenada urges that all anti-personnel landmines now in existence be destroyed, and further production banned forthwith. Moreover, Grenada now repeats another of its earlier exhortations: that the battlefields of war, past and present, should, as a United Nations sponsored project, be cleared of all weapons of war which still possess the potential for causing injury and even death, to dumb animals or to man.

In narcotics there resides an extremely powerful potential for the erosion of human dignity. The voluntary use of illicit drugs by individuals does not negate this destructive potential. Indeed, such voluntary indulgence merely hastens the transformation of latent potential into virulent activity.

Accordingly, Grenada urges the United Nations to be increasingly unrelenting in its campaign against narco-trafficking. Indeed, we suggest that the United Nations — with support as is appropriate in each case — sponsor national programmes whose purpose is to eradicate the use of illicit drugs by the pupils and students in our schools, and by all youths throughout our world.

In this regard, we applaud the drug abuse reduction education (DARE) project and commend it for use throughout the world, modified as may be most appropriate to particular circumstances.

Disasters occur in many forms. Yet whether natural in origin or the product of human device, physical disasters constitute a most significant threat to human dignity, as they do to human life.

As to natural disasters, humankind is aware of that threat. Hence the awe experienced when we are confronted by such disasters. That very feeling of awe, though, may well, in its embrace, extend to an acceptance of the consequences as being inevitable — and

less only in degree than the inevitability of the disaster itself. This may well explain the inadequacies of actions for disaster preparedness which are so regularly observable. We must confront this form of resignation.

We must also confront the deliberate and wilful human imposition of physical disaster.

Human dignity is assaulted also by economic disaster. Recent experiences in the Far East, and the current ones in other parts of our world, bear telling testimony to this.

Grenada contends that the United Nations and its relevant subsidiary bodies, as well as its appropriate agencies and agents, must, as a matter of conscience, revisit the concept of globalization which has informed various regimes, especially in relation to trade of all kinds, which have caused such degradation of human dignity and such pain among the peoples of the world.

Trade that is not informed by concern for humanness does not promote human well-being. Indeed, it cannot. For the very ignoring of such concern is one of the hallmarks of a diabolical origin.

Our world needs to be humanity-centred and humanity-friendly. Grenada urges that we regulate the many systems which together compose our global interactions.

Grenada humbly invites attention to, and consideration of, the observations of an international non-governmental organization committee on human rights in trade and investment. By a letter dated 20 July 1998, the committee invited our Prime Minister and our Foreign Minister to reflect on some potential threats to our people's enjoyment of their human rights. The potential for these threats resides in one or another of the multilateral investment agreements and the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements.

Five such threats were identified, and we accept the validity of the arguments adduced in each case. Nonetheless, only three are presented here so as to stimulate curiosity, and thus further contemplation.

First, the human right to self-determination embraces the right of all peoples to determine their economic future. This subsidiary right may well be frustrated, if not denied, where freedom is given to foreign investors to operate without a requirement of social responsibility to the overall community in which they do business.

Secondly, pursuance of the concept of non-discrimination in trade and investment may well militate against the pursuit of governmental policy to eliminate unjust discrimination, on the one hand, and, on the other, to promote the relaxation of equality on the part of vulnerable groups.

Thirdly, stipulated conditions in favour of foreign investors may very well be inimical to the right to realize the fullness of one's human dignity.

Earth, with its physical environment, is a divine gift to all the people of the world, and there devolves upon all of us a collective responsibility to protect both our planet-home and its environment. Further, we have been given authority over the locality in which we choose to live — such authority, however, not extending to destructively impinging on any other similar locality, irrespective of its size or population. Thus, every nation has the right to develop the resources of its territory, but not to the detriment of the people of any other nation.

Accordingly, to engage in the transportation of nuclear waste through the terrestrial or marine environments of other countries is to engage in violating the human rights of the people of those countries. The same is true of dumping toxic waste, or food considered in the country of origin or of processing to be hazardous to health, on the markets of the less developed countries of our world.

Attention has already been invited in this presentation to the ignominious collapse of the League of Nations, as well as to the cause of that calamity. Suffice it, therefore, simply to refer now to instances of membership in the Untied Nations of both components of what hitherto were single sovereign States.

The people of the Republic of China on Taiwan — and they number more than 22 million — have exercised the right to participate in international organizations, including the United Nations. And in the further exercise of that right, they have chosen to contribute internationally towards the realization by the peoples of the less developed countries of the fullness of their human dignity. And the Republic of China on Taiwan has chosen to do so within the compass of certain regional and international organizations which are associated in one way or another with the United Nations system. To deny those 22 million people the right to exercise that choice is to violate their human right to choose. Further, to engage in such denial is also to enforce a restriction on

the enjoyment of enhanced benefit by the peoples of States which are members of those organizations.

Grenada therefore calls for the granting to the Republic of China on Taiwan of an appropriate form of membership that would allow for participation by the Republic of China on Taiwan in the World Health Organization, the World Trade Organization and the Caribbean Development Bank.

Grenada does not condone terrorism. Indeed, we condemn it, whosoever the perpetrators may be. In so condemning terrorism, we are especially mindful of the vicious action-reaction spiral relating to engagement in terrorist activity, whose viciousness increases with each cycle. And in this latter regard we perceive as engaging in terrorism any action that is calculated to strike terror into the minds and hearts of people anywhere.

Quite early in this presentation, reference was made to Aquinas's concept of peace. But no attention has yet been given here to the achievement of the tranquillity of order, which Aquinas defines as peace. Comment has, however, been made on aggression and violations of one kind or another. Accordingly, it is fitting that this presentation should end with a succinct elaboration of Aquinas's concept of peace, which it must be stated, is not taken from any of the works of Aquinas. Rather, it is taken from a little booklet entitled *Golden Moments*, and this particular piece bears the caption "If there is":

> "If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world".

May God bless everyone who participates in the deliberations of this Assembly, whatever the business or occasion, so that this Assembly may truly be a blessing on our world.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is His Excellency The Honourable Mapopa Chipeta, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malawi.

Mr. Chipeta (Malawi): It was the wish of His Excellency Mr. Bakili Muluzi, President of the Republic of Malawi, to come and address the General Assembly in person, but owing to pressing commitments at home he has been unable to do so. I therefore deliver this statement on his behalf.

Let me join preceding speakers in conveying deep sympathy to the peoples of the Caribbean region and of the southern United States with regard to the natural disaster, in the form of a hurricane which has struck them over the past few days.

Let me congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti on his election to the presidency of the current session of the General Assembly and to affirm our confidence in his ability to conduct the work of this session successfully. I would like also to pay a special tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, for the innovative and constructive manner in which he carried out his task during the fifty-second session. His wit and sense of humour helped the Assembly accomplish so much during a very difficult session, which was probably a turning-point in the work of the United Nations. The reforms that we agreed upon during the reform Assembly should surely provide the necessary momentum for a more efficient and effective United Nations.

Let me also express my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, especially for the manner in which he has shouldered his important responsibilities. His outstanding leadership role, particularly with regard to United Nations reform, the problems of my own continent, Africa, and during the recent Iraq crisis has put the United Nations back at centre stage in its meaningful engagement in international affairs. We encourage the Secretary-General to continue his good work with the same dynamic spirit so as to better adapt the Organization to the current and future needs of mankind.

Malawi fully supports the reforms that are being undertaken by the United Nations. We have no doubt that they will not only increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our Organization, but also enable it to respond effectively and in a timely manner to new challenges. I particularly welcome the creation of the post of Deputy Secretary-General. I believe that with this new office the United Nations will continue to play a central role in promoting economic and social development and enhancing assistance for development, particularly to developing countries.

The development agenda, focusing on the eradication of poverty and the provision of basic amenities to humankind, corresponds to the efforts of the

Organization in the area of peace and security. They indeed complement each other.

Malawi looks forward to the finalization of the remaining issues on the reform package, including proposals on the Millennium Assembly, which we fully support.

This year's session of the General Assembly comes at a time when we are commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We believe it is now time to take stock of the progress that has been made in the promotion and protection of human rights since the Universal Declaration was adopted in 1948 and identify additional ways and means to help enhance the promotion and protection of human rights universally.

The United Nations machinery for the promotion and protection of human rights has done an impeccable job in the past, and Malawi places a lot of trust in it to do even better in the near future, particularly in a reformed United Nations where a human rights culture will permeate the system as a whole. While recognizing the critical role played by the United Nations in this field, we also believe that Member States hold the key to a world free of impunity, a global society where human rights transcend all our apparent divisions.

We should therefore not only preach the promotion and protection of human rights but also put into practice what we preach and deepen our understanding of the subject. Since the concept of human rights may not be clearly understood by many sectors of our societies, the success of building a human rights culture across our societies will depend on the ability of our Governments and civil society to provide civic education to the people.

In Malawi we have created necessary institutions, such as the Human Rights Commission, the Law Reform Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Anti-corruption Bureau which, together with various non-governmental organizations, are playing a critical role in enhancing a deeper understanding of human rights as well as related issues of governance.

As we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, our optimism about a better future based on the rule of law and respect for the rights of others has been further fortified by the adoption last July in Rome of the Statute on the establishment of the International Criminal Court. Malawi fully supports this Court and looks forward to the early entry into force of the Statute and the finalization of the outstanding issues before the Preparatory Commission.

However, we pause in our optimism about a better world because of certain trends and developments. Malawi is particularly disturbed by the recent wave of terrorist acts. Terrorism is a threat to peace, security and stability, and therefore cannot be condoned in whatever form or manifestation. We condemn terrorism and reject this cowardly phenomenon as a means of resolving disputes, misunderstandings or political differences. We believe that collectively we should redouble our efforts to deal with terrorism by establishing more measures aimed at its total elimination. Malawi also strongly condemns the barbaric acts of terrorism that took place during August in Nairobi, Kenya; Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania; Omagh, Northern Ireland; and Cape Town, South Africa.

Similarly, we are gravely concerned about the amassing of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, which threaten the future of mankind. Recent tests by some countries confirm our fears. We cannot place blame on these countries alone, so long as others possess these weapons. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) regimes are not an end in themselves. We believe that our ultimate goal should be the complete elimination of all these dangerous weapons within a specific time frame, so as to guarantee the safety of the world.

As we approach the new millennium, it is important that all the existing contradictions which hinder the achievement of global peace and security be removed. One way of doing this is to abide by relevant international instruments. In this regard, I wish to inform the Assembly that Malawi has recently ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on anti-personnel mines. Malawi welcomes the coming into force of the Convention on anti-personnel mines. We appeal to all States which have not yet done so to become parties to these instruments without further delay.

Malawi has a long-standing history of peace, as well as social and political stability. In 1994 Malawians opted for a democratic multi-party system of government which guarantees fundamental freedoms to every citizen. In the last four years we have established democratic institutions that stand for the rule of law and good governance, as well as respect for fundamental freedoms such as transparency and accountability. We have managed to

achieve these because of the peace and stability that now prevail in our country. The right to peace is a right that we cherish for all. The development that we seek for the world cannot be realized without security and peace.

Within our region Malawi attaches considerable importance to cooperation with respect to conflict prevention and resolution. The commendable work undertaken through the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution deserves special mention. Given the magnitude and complexity of the problems to be resolved, that body needs increased support from the international community to accomplish its laudable goals.

We believe that the best way to resolve disputes or conflicts in order to guarantee durable peace, security and stability is through amicable negotiation and not force. Malawi therefore welcomes the Secretary-General's report on Africa and the interest it has generated. We are encouraged by the positive interventions that the United Nations has made to date. The debate of the Security Council last week at Foreign Minister level will only fortify Africa's resolve to galvanize its collective political will.

Indeed, Malawi applauds the commitment of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. Despite all the efforts of the United Nations — during which many have lost their lives in the service of peace — conflicts and factional wars continue in various parts of the world, causing death, massive displacements of populations and floods of refugees and loss of property. Angola, Kosovo, Afghanistan and other parts of the globe continue to furnish tragic examples of the problems that beset us.

We are disturbed by developments in Angola. The delay in the implementation of the Lusaka peace accord and the non-compliance with various Security Council resolutions are of grave concern to us. The people of Angola deserve much better. The ultimate tribute to the late Mr. Alioune Blondin Beye and all the many others that have died in the quest for peace would be the restoration of peace and reconciliation in Angola. We therefore call on UNITA in particular to take all necessary steps to facilitate the implementation of the remaining issues under the Lusaka peace accord in order to give the people of Angola a chance for peace and security.

We are equally concerned with the developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Malawi supports the decisions taken by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) at its recent summit meeting in Mauritius. Peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the whole Great Lakes region will only make Africa realize its vast potential.

In Burundi, the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, the Comoros and Guinea-Bissau, and between Ethiopia and Eritrea, dialogue must prevail in the search for solutions to the problems that affect them. We call on all parties to give a peaceful resolution of their problems a chance in order for them to achieve a lasting solution. Kosovo and Afghanistan continue to bleed, while hunger and despair ravage the southern belly of the Sudan, and the humanitarian crisis in Somalia continues. The international community can indeed make a difference.

In Sierra Leone, we express our relief that the democratically elected Government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah has resumed its rightful place. We applaud the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the OAU in this regard. We support the initiatives that President Kabbah is pursuing as the country starts the long, slow process of reconstruction and rehabilitation. Malawi welcomes the developments in Nigeria, and we encourage President Abubakar to forge ahead with all the necessary reforms towards the restoration of democratic rule in Nigeria. In Western Sahara, Malawi is following the developments with keen interest. We welcome the Houston accords and look forward to the referendum later in the year.

The overwhelming adoption on 7 July last of resolution 52/250 on Palestine was a clear manifestation of the international community's desire to begin a new chapter in the Middle East. As with civilization, peace and security in the Middle East would no doubt have a reverberating effect on developments in world affairs as we enter into the next century. We call upon Israel and the Palestinian Authority to bring fresh impetus to their negotiations. Malawi welcomes the current initiatives aimed at giving new momentum to the negotiations. Malawi also welcomes the recent developments on the question relating to the Lockerbie disaster. We trust these developments will lead to an early resolution of the matter and therefore an urgent lifting of sanctions against Libya.

One of the major issues for the United Nations is the concern for national identity. In this century nations have been born. Great nations have disintegrated, while

others have found new solutions and come back together. It is in this spirit of helping the powers of healing that Malawi stands to reiterate its conviction that the question of the participation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the activities of the United Nations on the basis of respect for the principle of universality and the sovereign equality of States deserves consideration. Malawi believes that appropriate participation by the Republic of China on Taiwan in the international community would be an important factor for peace, stability and international cooperation in that part of the world.

Malawi will hold general elections next year. This follows the multiparty elections held in 1994, the first in 30 years. During that election, the United Democratic Front took the reins of power following a free, fair and credible electoral process. The change that we decided upon is irreversible, and all necessary measures are being taken to consolidate the new dispensation. We are committed to facilitating the exercise by all of our people of their civil and political rights. The Government of Malawi is committed to holding free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections.

We therefore invite the international community to come to Malawi and witness the electoral process. At the same time, we appeal to it, particularly development partners, to help us with logistical, financial and human resource support. Free and fair elections can be realized only through the provision of adequate resources. We expect the United Nations to play a critical role in this overall effort, which the people of Malawi so desire.

Since the multiparty Government was ushered in, it has striven to increase the pace of economic reform in Malawi. We value economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, in the same way as we do civil and political rights. We believe that the private sector should be the engine of economic growth and that the duty of the Government is to create a conducive environment. In this respect, the Government of Malawi has embarked on a privatization process, disengaging itself from the commercially oriented parastatals.

Apart from the conducive investment climate obtaining in Malawi, banking and financial services have also been liberalized. The economic and financial reforms that we have embarked on can be successfully sustained only if they are backed by adequate support from the international community, including a favourable international economic climate.

The world trade and financial outlook, however, appears hostile for commodity-dependent countries like Malawi. As we approach the next millennium, the negative effects of globalization and liberalization, particularly on weak economies, should be addressed with the necessary resolve and in a holistic fashion. The persistence of poverty in the world, particularly in Africa, requires the elaboration within the various bodies of coherent policies to confront the major problems that impede development. External debt, deteriorating terms of trade, difficulties in or lack of access to international markets, declining official development assistance and the negative effect of structural adjustment programmes all form a myriad of issues that require urgent attention.

All these issues have to be addressed within the context of the need for the rational utilization of the world's natural resources and the need to protect the environment. The world cannot remain aloof as poverty and despair wreak havoc on many of our people. The many gains that we will have made in civil and political rights will have no meaning at all if the socioeconomic ills that the people confront are not addressed. We are encouraged by the high-level dialogue held here recently. What is needed is action to realize fully the economic, social and cultural rights that we also seek.

The founding fathers of this Organization gave us an instrument which has withstood the test of time. It remains a relevant instrument. As we prepare for the third millennium, let us operationalize it in partnership for the global community, so that we may together triumph over suffering and despair.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in the exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mwamba Kapanga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*interpretation from French*): This morning the Assembly heard a statement by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda. When the aggression began, the Government of

the Democratic Republic of the Congo condemned Uganda's involvement in its territory, and Ugandan authorities denied outright that their armed forces had participated in the hostilities. But the international community now knows, since the questioning of the Ugandan President by his country's Parliament, that the Ugandan army violated Congolese borders and occupied several cities in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In exercising its right of reply, my delegation is in a good position to offer clarifications that will once again enable representatives to better understand the nature of the aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo that has gone on for more than a month.

I will not reiterate the details already given in our statements of 23 September 1998, but I must ask: even if, as the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda affirmed this morning, our two countries had an agreement on security cooperation along our common border, would this give Uganda the right to send its troops to attack Kisangani, the third most important Congolese city, which is located more than 500 kilometres from the Ugandan border? Even worse, thousands of Ugandan military personnel are dispersed throughout the hinterlands of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and have attacked Kitona, Moanda, Banana, Boma and Matadi, which are more than 2,000 kilometres away, in the extreme south-west of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Moreover, it is astounding to note that Uganda continues to invoke the provisions of the alleged agreement in defiance of the presidential decree of 28 July 1998 putting an end to military cooperation and calling for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Congolese territory. This step was taken by President Laurent-Désiré Kabila after consultation with and in agreement with his Rwandan and Ugandan colleagues.

We must ask ourselves whether the celebrated agreement of which Uganda is now so proud is so flexible as to authorize an uninvited foreign army to take part in conflicts designed to destabilize the very partner with which the agreement was signed. The First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda has justified, on the basis of security reasons, his country's aggression against the peaceful people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while at the same time claiming that it is Ugandan armed bands hostile to the Kampala Government that are pillaging Congolese villages. Why is it then that the loyalist Ugandan troops who are in Congolese territory in order to ensure the tranquillity of their countrymen along the border are unable to halt these infiltrations and their after-effects? This question concerns my delegation, as it should the whole international community.

What the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda did not say is that the troops of his country have engaged in rape, plunder, extortion, assassinations and the forced induction of children into their army. In some instances these children have been coldly shot down for refusing to join. Entire villages have disappeared from the map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a result of barbarous acts committed by the Ugandan invaders. The Assembly should also note the Ugandans' destructive nature, evident in the lack of compunction they have shown about dismantling economic and industrial infrastructure in the country. Do Members think that these acts are likely to promote the subregion's stability and security – of which the Ugandans would like to be the great champions? The Democratic Republic of the Congo believes that the Ugandans must give up such musings, and it is time for all who have been encouraging these activities to persuade the Ugandans to stop.

On behalf of my Government, and given the resolutions of the last summit in Libreville, I call upon the international community to recognize that the settlement of this conflict presupposes the unconditional withdrawal of the invading Ugandan troops and their allies. If the international community truly wants stability in the subregion, the mono-ethnic powers and armies that are working to establish ethnic supremacy in this part of Africa must be persuaded instead to promote integration and equality among all segments of their societies through the democratization of their regimes and the holding of transparent and free elections. By doing this, they will put an end to the political turmoil, the massive displacements of people throughout the region, external aggression and the invasion of their territories, as well as to the attempts to destabilize and break up States.

Mr. Acemah (Uganda): I would like to make a few remarks for the record in response to the statement just made by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Contrary to the allegations which have just been made by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda

has never invaded that country. Ugandan troops have not attacked or occupied any of the towns that were mentioned, including Kisangani. Uganda has not committed aggression against our neighbour, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is purely an internal affair of that country. As a neighbour, we are naturally concerned about its implications for Uganda's peace and security, as well as for peace and security in our subregion.

Uganda's position on this matter was clearly stated by my Minister this morning. For the record, let me say that since last year it has been mutually agreed between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo that our two countries would jointly operate in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the purpose of containing and eventually removing bandits and terrorists who have been operating from bases located in the eastern part of that country and destabilizing Uganda. Pursuant to the understanding between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda has maintained a military presence in the eastern part of that country in accordance with the provisions of the bilateral agreement between the two countries.

Uganda has no territorial designs on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is not the primary responsibility of Uganda to dictate political arrangements in that country. However, any internal political arrangements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that do not cater to Uganda's legitimate security concerns will naturally be of concern to us.

We would therefore like to state that we are not involved in the internal conflict in that country. Indeed, since the 1960s, Uganda has provided support to all progressive and patriotic forces there. Uganda has hosted and continues to host thousands of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our outstanding record in our bilateral relations with that country speaks for itself.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

United Nations A/53/PV.25

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-third Session

25th plenary meeting
Friday, 2 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti . . . . . (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Jamil Mahuad Witt, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The Assembly will first hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador.

Mr. Jamil Mahuad Witt, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, His Excellency Mr. Jamil Mahuad Witt, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mahuad Witt (*interpretation from Spanish*): When I assumed the presidency of my country less than two months ago, I recalled that in the tradition of the Aymara, an indigenous people of the Republic of Bolivia, a human being and a country — and, may I say, the United Nations — do their work if they manage to find harmony in seven fundamental fields.

For the Aymaras there is a type of harmony that rises from the head, and that is the harmony we need to maintain with our beliefs and principles.

There is a second type of harmony which goes from the feet down. That is the harmony we must maintain with nature, the Earth and the environment.

There is a third harmony that goes from the body out to the right side. That is the harmony we must have with our families, with those closest to us.

A fourth type of harmony moves towards the left. That is the harmony we must have with our neighbours, our colleagues at work and those others who, without being very close to us, surround us.

There is a fifth type of harmony which moves forward from us, and for the Aymara people that is harmony with the past. They believe that human beings face the past and not the future, because we can see what is in front of us, and the past is the only thing we can really see.

A sixth type of harmony is behind us. That is our harmony with the future, because although we do not see the future we have an intuition about it and a sense of it. Often, although it has not yet come, we can already feel its weight on our shoulders.

The seventh and final type of harmony is self-harmony, an inner harmony.

If we achieve harmony in those seven areas, we will have a harmonious body, a harmonious country and a harmonious world. It is with that vision that we have

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begun to govern in Ecuador; and I believe it is with that vision that the United Nations is doing its work.

We can discuss many issues here. I want to focus on two, both related to left-sided harmony — harmony with our neighbours, international harmony — and their implications for the development of our peoples.

In Latin America, as in many parts of the world, we face one of the gravest crises in our history. We have been considering the advantages of globalization. Now we are also suffering the problems of globalization. When we speak of a global system, we speak of a real network, which, like a large cobweb, encompasses us all. The problem with such a network is that wherever we touch or apply pressure to the web we produce a vibration and an impact throughout the web.

The great majority of the countries of Latin America have made enormous efforts to overcome the problems of previous decades. They have worked to reduce their fiscal deficits to a minimum, to open up to the global economy, to participate in trade and to share the principles of open, fair and transparent trade, free of discrimination. They have understood that integration is the tool for progress in the future. They have established regional markets, and now they seek a continental market. After so much effort, which at times has been costly in internal terms, we have found that that effort can be wasted, that it may not be a way out of our problems, because of an international crisis, which did not originate in our countries; it came from outside, but because of globalization, and the network connecting us, we are all affected.

We understand the mechanics of the system. We understand how something that affects markets in Asia has an impact on Latin America. Yet, while we understand the mechanics of the system, we cannot see its fairness. If while working together we encounter problems that do not originate in our region, we must ask the industrialized countries in particular to take decisions that will ensure that not all the countries of the world suffer to the extent that we are suffering now.

There is talk of risk of a global recession as severe as, or even more severe, than that of the 1930s. We see the stock markets of the largest countries of our region affected daily. We see a crisis that is already striking the industrialized countries. I think this is the appropriate forum for us to consider the need to work together. We small countries like Ecuador can do little in a crisis of this magnitude but call for reflection and true fraternity among our nations so that a problem affecting the whole world can be overcome. Otherwise, a crisis as big as this leaves many of us with no option but to wait and see how we can protect ourselves against these troubles.

The countries of Latin America see ourselves as a region, and we believe we must behave as a region. Every country has its own characteristics and has to do what is necessary individually, but it is the region as a whole that is being affected by all these changes.

The countries of Latin America have not come here simply to ask for money and loans, as they have done at other times of crisis. The countries of the region have not appeared here one by one to try to overcome their difficulties on an individual basis, as on other occasions. This time we have made joint proposals — just, global proposals. We hope these proposals will yield results.

All analysts maintain that unless interest rates are lowered, in particular in the industrialized countries, this global trend is undoubtedly not going to change. The 0.25 per cent drop in interest rates was widely considered important but insufficient in view of the magnitude of the current crisis. It is therefore crucial that we deal with this matter here in the Assembly.

Along with this international crisis, Ecuador is confronting an issue that is fundamental to its development: its relations with Peru, and the search for a definitive peace with Peru. We have a problem that has been dragged out over many decades. In its most recent stage, for the last 56 years, we have had a protocol of peace, friendship and boundaries, which should now enter a definitive phase. Peace is our objective; we see it as an ethical, moral and economic good. Nothing is more advantageous to the budgets of our countries than peace. We can do great things for the benefit of our economies.

In this case, peace is accompanied by a set of incentives, specifically, the possibility of $3 billion in loans from multilateral entities for border development projects, irrigation, roads, agricultural systems, schools and health centres, to give a few examples. This $3 billion — a very large sum for both countries — can be put into action if we achieve peace.

Over the past three years, we have been holding talks. Commissions have reached agreements on border integration, trade, navigation in the extraordinarily important basin of the Amazon river and measures of security and confidence-building for the future. But the

most delicate and difficult issue has yet to be resolved: the establishment of the borderline between the two countries. We have held talks at a number of levels — among our Foreign Ministers, in the negotiating commissions, among the countries that are guarantors of the protocol — and these conversations have also risen to the level of the presidencies of Peru and Ecuador. We have had three meetings in less than two months in order to seek that final agreement. Last night, I spoke with President Fujimori; he is planning to travel to the United States, and we agreed that tomorrow we will see each other here in New York for a fourth meeting to try to continue seeking the definitive formula that will resolve the question of our border in a way that is fitting, acceptable to the two countries and appropriate for our peoples.

The principles are clear. As countries, we cannot enter the twenty-first century dragging with us problems that date back to the nineteenth. We must embark on the twenty-first century with a clear and positive vision that is directed towards the future.

We share all the tenets of the United Nations on issues related to this one. We are completely in agreement with the Ottawa Convention on the question of landmines. Our country signed that Convention, and at the end of last week in Brasilia, the Presidents of Peru and Ecuador submitted to President Cardoso of Brazil a joint communiqué requesting that plans be drawn up for the removal of all the landmines that have been placed in the border area over the years. This is a positive and very real step; it means that the Convention will not simply be signed and ratified but will also be applied in practical terms in the field.

We are also completely in agreement with the proposals of the United Nations on the reduction of military budgets and expenditures. We believe that money should be invested in poverty reduction and in the social programmes and projects our peoples need so much. We are completely in agreement with the conventional disarmament programmes. We believe that trust must replace distrust, and we believe that this task, accomplished jointly, can allow us to leave behind long decades of mutual suspicion and the great scepticism that sometimes pervades our countries. We are in agreement as regards general and complete disarmament. We agree with the prohibition of nuclear weapons. We welcome the decision of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) to make all the countries of that region into a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

We believe in peace, and we are working to achieve it. It will be hard to find, in the future, two Presidents of neighbouring countries with a history of problems who are so firmly committed to peace, so deeply convinced that they must achieve peace, and so zealously at work to reach a speedy, just and honourable peace. We hope our efforts will soon meet their reward.

We completely support the initiatives of the United Nations on the subject of the protection of human rights. Ecuador has adopted its own national human rights plan into law. We are the second country in Latin America, and one of the first in the world, to adopt such a plan. It is not a plan of the Ecuadorian Government, but a plan made by Ecuadorian society, coordinated by the Ministry with the participation of representatives of various sectors of the society. We believe in human rights, and we defend them in their entirety and without reservation. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs was the first United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights before joining our Ministry for Foreign Relations, so our support in this field is complete.

In addition, we are concerned about the issue of sustainable development, and we will vigorously promote environmental issues. For the first time in history, a woman from a country that is not in the northern hemisphere has become chairperson of the world's largest intergovernmental organization on the environment. That woman's name is Yolanda Kakabadse, and she is the present Minister of the Environment in Ecuador. We seek to indicate several things by this, which are easily understandable in what I have just said.

These are the central issues in the link between the United Nations and my country: peace, the international crisis and the search for a just global accord, the environment and human rights. Other issues could be taken up, but I prefer to focus on this message.

I believe that there is no better way to pay tribute to the United Nations and to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights than for two countries with democratically elected Governments to seek peace and endeavour to sign a peace agreement — perhaps sign one this year — so that the development of our peoples can proceed and their quality of life can improve.

In this way we can sum up the most important human rights. Democracy, freedom, development, life, the right to work, gender-related issues, the problems of

minorities and the most disadvantaged groups and the protection of children are encompassed in these words that are so simple and so important: peace, development and international cooperation. We want to emphasize these ideas here, in this Organization which has done so much to bring them about throughout the world.

I wish the Assembly every success in its work for the benefit of all of humanity.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jamil Mahuad Witt, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Comoros, His Excellency Mr. Salim Hadji Himidi, on whom I now call.

Mr. Himidi (Comoros) *(interpretation from French)*: Allow me at the outset, Mr. President, on behalf of the people and Government of my country, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, to extend my sincere condolences to all the States and peoples who have suffered devastation from Hurricane Georges, and to the victims of the floods in the People's Republic of China and in Bangladesh.

I am pleased to be able to join with the distinguished and worthy representatives of States and Governments who have preceded me at this rostrum in extending to you, Sir, on behalf of the President of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, His Excellency El Hadj Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim, my warm congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third regular session.

I also pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, as well as to the greatly respected Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of our Organization, for the dedication, skill and other outstanding qualities which they have shown in carrying out their respective functions.

My country, which is located at the north-west entrance to the Mozambique Channel, half way between the East African coast and the large island of Madagascar, small, fragmented and geographically isolated though it is, was accepted to full membership in the United Nations on 12 November 1975 by resolution 3385 (XXX), as a State comprising the islands of Anjouan, Grande-Comore — also known as Ngazidja — Mayotte and Mohéli.

We should also note that from 1889 until the referendum through which my country acceded to independence, all the laws and other regulatory texts applied by the former colonial Power recognized and sanctioned the territorial unity and integrity of the archipelago of the Comoros.

Thus for 23 years, at each of the regular sessions of this Assembly, successive resolutions have been adopted recalling that the continuation of the legal, administrative and military hold of the former colonial Power over the Comorian island of Mayotte is a flagrant violation of resolution 1514 (XV) and of the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter. We therefore hope that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Ad Hoc Committee of Seven on the Question of the Comorian Island of Mayotte, presided over by His Excellency Mr. Omar Bongo, President of the Republic of Gabon, will resume its work and re-establish the dialogue between the Comoros and France on this question.

Finally, we appeal to the wisdom and goodwill beyond our continent, so that the Comoros can return once and for all to the path of peace, security and hope. I should like solemnly to appeal to this Assembly for assistance to my country so that a solution to the problem caused by its dismemberment can be found and my country can enter the twenty-first century as a reunited country.

The people, Government and head of State whom I am honoured and privileged to represent here today would like to express, through my delegation, their gratitude and acknowledgement to the Secretary-General of our universal Organization for the clarity and lucidity of his analysis of the causes of conflict on the African continent and for his courageous initiatives in the search for peace and sustainable development in Africa and throughout the world. In this context, we urge the United Nations system and its specialized agencies to do all in their power to ensure the rapid and complete implementation of all of the recommendations provided

by the Secretary-General in his report to the Security Council which he presented last April.

My Government urgently appeals to the international community for cooperation to effectively combat terrorism in all its forms. Only international determination, with respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, will make it possible to put an end to horrendous terrorist acts. Terrorism spares no part of the world and no stratum of society. Who can forget the murderous acts committed this summer in Omagh, Ireland; Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam; Cape Town, South Africa; and Luxor, Egypt? For our part, my Government is cooperating openly and fully with the American authorities to shed light on the suspected participation of a national of my country in the abhorrent crimes committed in East Africa.

Since my country is a telling example of the hotbeds of tension which are now mobilizing the resources of the international community, I should like to recall that for a year and a half now the Organization of African Unity has taken up — in close cooperation with the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and, very recently, the Non-Aligned Movement — the separatist crisis on the Comorian island of Anjouan and the links to be established with the dismemberment of our archipelago State by the island of Mayotte's continuing to be under foreign administration.

The efforts and commitments of the Secretary-General of the OAU, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, and his Special Envoys, Ambassador Pierre Yéré and Mr. Mamoudou Kane, since the beginning of the crisis, as well as the efforts of the Governments involved in regional coordination to resolve the crisis in the Comoros, namely, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles, have been recognized and deserve admiration and support.

My country's people, Government and head of State would like to convey through my delegation to the entire international community their commitment to peace and unity and reconciliation between the community of islands which make up the nation of the Comoros.

Special mention should be made here of the most respected statesman of our world, President Nelson Mandela, who, in his dual capacity as head of State entrusted with regional coordination to resolve the crisis in the Comoros, mandated by the OAU, and Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, has agreed to bring to bear his full authority and his personal prestige throughout the world to call upon the parties in conflict in the Comoros to conclude a peace of the brave, in which there is neither victor nor vanquished, peace brought about for the greatest possible benefit of the inhabitants of our archipelago State.

In the light of the claims and the rights acknowledged by our institutions, traditions, conventions and customs in a multi-island society, El Hadj Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim, President of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, declared after the OAU summit in Ouagadougo, and again recently in Durban during the NAM summit, that he was ready to work in a spirit of openness and reconciliation for greater decentralization and autonomy for each of the four islands making up our archipelago State. Thus each of our islands will be able to elect a governor and a local legislative assembly to deal with all matters relating to the immediate and particular concerns of each of our communities of the islands of the archipelago State. An inter-island commission will work for the equitable and proportional distribution of the international community's resources and investments.

Here I quote what El Hadj Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim has rightly said, as follows:

> "This is an issue of bringing the administration closer to its subjects, promoting the responsibility within a single citizenry and restoring the federal bodies of a united State their fundamental roles of organization, arbitration and the management of international sovereignty.
>
> "The future of our country will only be ensured when all opinions and all trends, in an atmosphere of greater tolerance, are accepted and fulfilled."

(*spoke in Arabic*)

> "Thus have We made of you
> An *Unmat* justly balanced.
> That ye might be witnesses
> Over the nations,
> And the Messenger a witness
> Over yourselves". (*The Holy Koran, II:143*)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Paskal Milo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Albania, on whom I now call.

Mr. Milo (Albania): Allow me first, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. I am sure that your leadership constitutes a guarantee of continued success.

At the same time, I would like to express my appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Udovenko, for his excellent leadership during the fifty-second session.

Mr. Al-Ashtal (Yemen), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is a special pleasure for me to address the Assembly in this session, which coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights. Although decades have passed, this document remains profoundly relevant to our world today. In fact, its standards continue to be an essential guide for evaluating the development and emancipation of human society. The Member countries of the United Nations should be proud of this document's lasting legacy.

While affirming the ongoing importance of the Declaration, I would like to stress the need for the UN's system of values to undergo an ongoing harmonization with new challenges. In this framework, on behalf of the Government of Albania, I commend the efforts made under the leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in the process of reform of our Organization. We hail the positive results achieved so far, and encourage the United Nations to continue to respond concretely to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Nearly three weeks ago Albania once again attracted the attention of the United Nations due to the violent events aimed at striking a blow against the fragile democratic institutions that were under the process of restoration from the deep crisis my country passed through last year. Certain political forces that lost their power in last year's free elections obviously encouraged the attack and occupation of the main State institutions.

That attempt to overthrow violently the legitimate Albanian Government was condemned by the whole democratic world, which strongly supported the President of the Republic in his endeavour to reestablish the political equilibrium that had been deeply disturbed and to guarantee the normal and democratic functioning of State powers and institutions. We highly appreciate this, and thank the international community for the support offered to Albania during its difficult days, and we welcome the establishment of the group of Friends of Albania. We view this as an important instrument in our common efforts for the stability of Albania and the consolidation of State structures and institutions.

We are conscious of the difficulties and negative phenomena with which we are coping. We are painfully aware that the civilian population of Albania continues to be considered the most armed in Europe. This is a reality which we have to face every moment. Taking into account the threat that this poses not only to Albania but also to the security of the region, our Government has appealed the United Nations for assistance in this regard. Allow me on this occasion to thank the Secretary-General for the seriousness with which he has dealt with this problem, and the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, for the mission he led to Albania. I want to express our readiness to work together with the United Nations to collect the weapons which fell into the hands of the civilian population during the political unrest of 1997.

I want to state that my Government is working diligently to establish the long-term rule of law in our country. Through lengthy deliberations among Albania's political forces, we have made an extensive endeavour to draft a constitution that recognizes the need to share political power and to secure human rights. It is my sincere hope that by the end of this year the Albanian people will be able to express their views on the proposed draft constitution. The adoption of a constitution ratified by the people of Albania that recognizes the fundamental rule of law and protects liberties will prepare Albania for complete integration into international structures. Most important, this path offers the best and brightest hope for our country.

I want also to address Albania's economic situation. Rebuilding the economy has been the highest of priorities for the Albanian Government, especially since the fall of the pyramid schemes which led to widespread micro- and macroeconomic collapse and to the impoverishment of many Albanians. Our response to this crisis was direct and decisive: in exposing the deceit of the pyramid schemes, in closing down the pyramid structures and in rebuilding trust in the Albanian economy. In cooperation with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the assets of those firms were audited, and we initiated the process of returning liquid assets to legitimate creditors. Now I can declare with conviction that pyramid-scheme-based businesses do not exist in our country any more. We are working at present to create

new, active policies for employment, self-employment and professional training.

The task of rebuilding Albania's economy constitutes a great challenge that requires the support of the international community. The Government has worked diligently to break down Albania's decades of isolationism and to become part of the world community of nations. The main directions of our policy so far have been the following.

First, the engagement of Albania in Euro-Atlantic integration is aimed at the creation of acceptable national standards in accordance with the common Euro-Atlantic values of common security, human rights standards, and the promotion of the liberal market-economy policies.

Secondly, Albania's cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has also had concrete results, expressed in successful cooperation, in the framework of the Partnership for Peace, on the qualification of the Albanian army and police. The first Albanian company of peacekeepers has in fact made tangible progress in that direction.

And thirdly, our cooperation with the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has been further strengthened. It includes their assistance not only in the shaping and improvement of Albanian legislation, but also in monitoring the application of common standards. I take this opportunity to thank those institutions for their assistance and to express once again the willingness and the political commitment of our Government to raise the quality of this cooperation in the future.

Albania's cooperation with the European Union in the economic area remains a basis for multilateral cooperation. We consider membership in the World Trade Organization to be vital in furthering the liberalization of Albanian trading markets. In the meantime, we have strengthened our relations with international financial institutions, which have committed major financial resources to the economic development of Albania.

On this occasion, please allow me to express my gratitude for the approval of the first United Nations Development Programme country cooperation framework for Albania, and my desire for the further strengthening of cooperation between Albania and the United Nations system. Albania now has serious and powerful partners for the development of our country. The Rome and Brussels conferences will be followed by another follow-up conference in Tirana, at which we will assess our progress and make new commitments for the future.

Turning to matters of international policy, the Albanian Government has devoted much effort to regional concerns. Southeastern Europe has inherited a series of problems which are the political, economic, social, psychological and institutional legacy of the communist era. However, we are deeply convinced that there are ways and means to build up confidence, cooperation and friendship among the Balkan nations. Albania has embraced enthusiastically all the initiatives which cultivate peace and cooperation in southeastern Europe, such as the Central European Initiative, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation process, the South-East European Cooperative Initiative, the Royaumont Platform for Action and the process of Balkan cooperation. All these initiatives will contribute to transparency of borders, free movement of goods, people and opinions among the countries of the region, and the setting up of common values on trade, transport, energy, telecommunication and the environment that will lay down the infrastructure for stability and peace in the region.

Towards this goal, we have worked on substantially improving bilateral relations with our neighbours. Significant steps were taken last year concerning relations with Italy, Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on which a great number of cooperative agreements were signed. Close partnership relations have developed with Turkey, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Slovenia, *et cetera*.

Although I am underlining these positive and encouraging aspects of regional cooperation in general, and especially of Albania's relations with its neighbours, we cannot ignore the fact that in the Balkans there still exist enclaves where fundamental human and national rights and freedoms, including the right to life, are brutally violated every day. I am, of course, referring here to the problem of Kosovo.

I would like to confirm the conviction of the Albanian Government that during the past months of the Kosovo crisis, Belgrade has ignored the appeals of the international community to find an appropriate solution to that situation, and has systematically destroyed the alternative of a peaceful solution, thus encouraging the option of violence. Some days ago, the Security Council adopted its resolution 1199 (1998), attributing the main

responsibility and blame for what is happening in Kosovo to the authorities in Belgrade. That resolution testified to unanimous political will on the part of the international community to act strongly to find a peaceful, political solution to the conflict, and left open the option of using other means if failure is repeated.

We hope that this time the clear warning given by Security Council resolution 1199 (1998), the Council's strong message issued yesterday and the warnings given by the NATO and world leaders, will be the last ones necessary to impose a political solution on the authorities in Belgrade, something which they cannot realize by themselves of their own will.

The political archives of Belgrade are quite rich with false manoeuvres and untrue statements. The so-called withdrawal of special Serbian police forces from Kosovo and the end of fighting against so-called terrorists is a new version of them. This is an old scenario of a Bosnian type, and we Albanians have ample reasons not to believe it.

What is happening today in Kosovo is the story of a tragedy foretold. Milosević has in fact ordered the implementation of his "ethnic cleansing" policy against Albanians under the pretext of combating so-called Albanian terrorism. This has so far proved to be a constant element of his strategy. In that way, Serbian propaganda has been trying to justify the indiscriminate attacks, massacres and atrocities of the Yugoslav army against the Albanian population of Kosovo, such as the ones seen lately in the media. Newborn children, pregnant women and elderly persons have been massacred in a bestial way. The Albanian Government strongly condemns this policy and openly declares that Milosević should be held accountable and responsible for genocide.

The Albanian Government urges the following. First, there should be strong and extensive international monitoring and assisting presence in Kosovo. The nature of this presence should be in accordance with the developments in the situation there. Secondly, there should be an immediate NATO military intervention for peace enforcement in Kosovo, as peaceful measures applied by the international community have so far failed. Thirdly, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia should start an investigation in accordance with her mandate in order to indict Milosević as a war criminal.

The current conflict in Kosovo, as rightly pointed out in the resolutions and presidential statement of the Security Council, may have a strong spillover danger. The neighbouring countries are directly affected not only by the wave of refugees, but also by its impact on the ethnic and political relations inside these countries. We have already been witness to these effects.

Albania has made its position quite clear. We are in favour of an immediate end to the conflict and the initiation of negotiations between Belgrade and Priština with the international involvement of a third party. This would guarantee their success. The negotiations should define the future status of Kosovo. The Albanian Government strongly believes that any solution to the Kosovo crisis should take into consideration and respect the will of its inhabitants for self-determination in accordance with the relevant international conventions.

Humanitarian problems have always been the focus of attention of our Organization, which has also gained valuable experience on how to deal with them. I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to one the most acute developments which has already been the object of attention in United Nations bodies. Thousands of Kosovo Albanians — women, old people and children — have left their country and have gone as refugees to Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Hundreds of thousands of others are now homeless, driven to wander in the forests and mountains of Kosovo, constantly facing terror and death; and it is now almost winter.

In spite of the known difficulties, the Albanian Government has taken all possible measures to cope with the difficult situation which was created as a result of the influx of Kosovo refugees in northern Albania. Albania, in cooperation with specialized agencies, has actually created suitable conditions to face the urgent need for food and temporary shelter. We appeal to these agencies to continue their assistance until this refugee crisis is resolved and Albanians can safely return to their homes.

We are convinced that the United Nations and the Security Council will fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with the United Nations Charter in the efforts to overcome the Kosovo crisis, which in fact has become a crisis of the Balkans and Europe. It is high time the United Nations and other international forums urgently intervened for the restoration of peace; otherwise we risk having a wider conflict.

On this occasion, I would like to thank the Security Council once again for the adoption of resolution 1199

(1998) and to commend in particular the initiators of that resolution, which constitutes an essential step in bringing peace to Kosovo and stability to the region.

Albania, like many other countries, is being affected by a set of phenomena such as drugs, illegal trafficking and organized crime. The Albanian Government has taken determined measures and is predisposed to cooperate with other countries to fight against these social scourges. We held a special session of the General Assembly this year devoted to the fight against drugs, as well as an open debate in the Security Council on children in armed conflicts. These efforts testify to the special attention paid to these social problems, and our Government hails them.

We appreciate the debate held by the Security Council on Africa, the System-wide Special Initiative on Africa and the engagement of the United Nations system for peace and development in Africa, a continent with incredible natural and human potentials.

My country also desires a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Middle East and the restarting of the dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, in conformity with the relevant international agreements and resolutions of Security Council.

We believe that the international community has often acted insufficiently in punishing the perpetrators of and the people politically responsible for crimes against mankind. Consequently, we appreciate the efforts made by the United Nations for the establishment of an International Criminal Court, and we consider this a process of strengthening the conscience of the international community, as well as a step forward in creating a collective positive reaction against such crimes.

The Albanian Government is of the opinion that the institutional reform of the United Nations is an ongoing process which is affected by the ever changing real world. The United Nations will be better able to face the new challenges of the new millennium if the intergovernmental institutions of the United Nations become even more democratic in their structure.

One key area of such reform is the Security Council. Albania follows attentively the proceedings of the Working Group for the restructuring of the Security Council and the efforts made to find a solution to this question. We are of the opinion that any decision to reform the Security Council should have the widespread support of member countries and must take into account the new realities that are occurring in international relations.

The reform of United Nations, and especially of the Security Council, will be a reality only if there is a general will to provide the United Nations with the necessary political support. Only then will this Organization lead our world to the common goal of the creation of a global society of sovereign nations based on the rule of law, respect for human rights, personal and religious liberties, economic prosperity and international peace.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is the Chairman of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. George Winston McKenzie.

Mr. McKenzie (Trinidad and Tobago): It gives me great pleasure to extend to Mr. Didier Opertti warmest congratulations on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on his election as President of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. Trinidad and Tobago is indeed heartened to see one of its regional neighbours in this post, more so given the close ties of friendship which exist between Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay. I am convinced that under his astute guidance the deliberations of the Assembly will be managed with the same skill and diplomacy with which he is known to discharge his duties of office.

I also take this opportunity to express deep appreciation for the manner in which his predecessor, Mr. Udovenko, undertook the tasks of office during his tenure as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. The impact of his leadership and the achievements of the Assembly during the last session of the General Assembly can only redound to the benefit of this body.

The United Nations has grappled, over the past 53 years of its existence, with myriad issues confronting the international community — old issues and new issues, especially those which have taken on a new dynamic in the international relations of our Member States. Having successfully manoeuvred through the high seas of the cold war, the United Nations continues to confront issues of direct concern to all its Member States. In striving to attain its goals of international peace and security and justice for all, which are the raison d'être of the United Nations, this most valuable Organization to all of the world's peoples is now drawn to focus on development

as a necessary precondition to the achievement of international peace and security.

We are now called upon to focus attention on the deep-seated problems of the global community. These include the alleviation of poverty; drug abuse and illicit drug-trafficking; environmental degradation; economic growth and social development of developing countries; and; more recently, the effects of the international financial crisis. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is of the view that these challenges can be successfully addressed only through international cooperation. No individual state or region can in isolation rid itself of these problems.

One of the principal tenets of international peace and security is the rule of international law. For too long, blatant disregard for international law has led to heinous crimes which have shocked the conscience of mankind, many of which have remained unpunished. Perpetrators of genocide, of crimes against humanity and of war crimes have acted with impunity, causing untold human suffering and loss of life on a massive scale.

Each life lost, each soul affected, each family, society or country touched by tragedy is one too many. The international community has not, until now, established a permanent mechanism to punish the perpetrators of these unspeakable crimes.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is proud of the role played by Mr. Arthur Robinson, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, in refocusing the attention of the international community in 1989 on the need for the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court.

We congratulate the ever increasing number of States which have worked assiduously since then to ensure the establishment of a permanent, independent and effective International Criminal Court. At the same time, we urge all States to continue, in the spirit of cooperation and compromise which ensured the success of the Rome Conference in July 1998, to complete the work that still remains to be done. In this quest, we all must be ever mindful of the continued threats to international peace and security as well as breaches of international justice, which are occurring even as we meet today.

When the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago urged the international community to create a permanent International Criminal Court, it was in part a recognition of the gravity of the scourge of drug trafficking and its attendant ills, and of the pressing need for the Court to address the question of the punishment of individuals responsible for these crimes at an international level. At the Diplomatic Conference held in Rome, Trinidad and Tobago, with the support of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member States and some other States, was successful in ensuring that the international community did not lose sight of the importance of the inclusion of the crimes of the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs within the jurisdiction of the Court. As a result, the Diplomatic Conference recommended that an acceptable definition and the inclusion of drug crimes be considered by a review conference to be convened after the entry into force of the Statute.

Drug trafficking and the associated crimes of money-laundering and trafficking in arms continue to pose serious threats to the social, economic and political foundations of countries of the Caribbean, and to erode the moral fabric of our societies. We welcome the conclusions and recommendations of the twentieth special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, held in June 1998, and we pledge our commitment to cooperate at the international, regional and national levels in the achievement of the goals and ideals which we adopted at that session.

Trinidad and Tobago will persist in its efforts on a regional basis to foster the type of cooperation that would combat the scourge of drug trafficking. Such action includes the implementation of the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action, which facilitates effective drug control cooperation in the region. Also, CARICOM countries, with the assistance of the Governments of Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, have created a witness protection programme. In addition, Port of Spain is the headquarters of the secretariat of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force on money-laundering.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is cooperating at the bilateral level with the three countries just mentioned in areas such as extradition and maritime counter-drug operations. We are also the beneficiary of technical assistance in the strengthening of our Counter Drug Crime Task Force to facilitate our efforts in addressing this menace to society.

Action at the national level includes the establishment of an agency to coordinate the overall efforts against drug-trafficking and the preparation of a

master plan to deal with the problem. A strong legal framework has been put in place to enable prosecutions and investigations. Appropriate legislation to facilitate judicial cooperation with other countries and participation in regional and multilateral institutions has also been enacted. Legislation currently before Parliament will significantly improve the provisions against money-laundering.

The eradication of drug-trafficking, money-laundering, and the traffic in arms and their associated evils must be a task for all Member States. The deleterious effects on our small societies threaten future generations of our peoples and have significant negative repercussions on our vulnerable economies. The eradication of this affliction of our societies is a *sine qua non* for development and for the achievement of international peace, security and justice.

Trinidad and Tobago shares the sadness, shock and outrage of the international community at the recent terrorist attacks on United States embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, as well as at the bombings in South Africa and in Ireland. This spectre of terrorism continues to rear its ugly head in our world, in spite of the numerous efforts that have been undertaken on a multilateral level to eradicate this evil.

At the second informal consultations of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations, held in New York on 24 September 1998, Caribbean Community Foreign Ministers condemned the recent terrorist attacks in several parts of the world and reiterated their strongest commitment to the fight against international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. They also pledged that their respective Governments would consider acceding to relevant international conventions and protocols on international terrorism. The Ministers reaffirmed that the most effective way to confront international terrorism is through an enhanced multilateral approach and multilateral actions, and with appropriate oversight and accountability measures.

International conferences have also attempted to draw up a blueprint for addressing the environmental problems that plague the nations of the world. In 1992, at the Earth Summit in Rio, the international community for the first time linked environmental and economic issues. The Barbados Programme of Action adopted two years later, which addressed the specific problems of small island developing States, complements Agenda 21, the blueprint for sustainable development adopted at Rio. The small island developing States (SIDS) Programme of Action, which is to be reviewed at a special session of the General Assembly next year, is therefore of critical importance to small island States. We anticipate that the results of the review will be more promising than those of Agenda 21.

The pace of globalization and economic liberalization has heightened the economic problems that developing countries face. This is evidenced in, among other things, the collapse of the financial markets, the unfair terms of trade and the developing countries' increasing difficulty in accessing the markets of the developed countries. The crisis presently facing many States and the gathering gloom over the world economy pose very real dangers for developing countries and therefore call for properly devised strategies and the establishment of new mechanisms to ensure our survival.

Recent developments within the international economic and financial arena are clear indications that the world economic system is crying out for urgent change. The imperfections, which are becoming increasingly glaring, can no longer be ignored. We cannot simply bear witness to the events. We must act now or lose a golden opportunity to influence the changes which are in the best interest of all humanity. We must have healthy, constructive dialogue at all levels and develop the political will and direction to find relevant solutions.

To this end, I wish to reiterate the call made by the honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Ralph Maraj, at the Twelfth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held last month in Durban, South Africa, for the convening of a United Nations conference on the world economy. It is evident from the views expressed from this podium during the last two weeks that Member States recognize the need for urgent action at the international level to address this issue.

In this volatile economic environment, small island developing States are rendered even more vulnerable by their inherent features of size, remoteness, insularity and susceptibility to natural disasters. Indeed, in one fell swoop any small advances in economic development can be brought to nought by natural disasters. The devastation wreaked by the recent Hurricane Georges on small States of the Caribbean bears sad testimony to this reality. Trinidad and Tobago shares the grief of its Caribbean neighbours at the loss of life and the damage to property suffered in this hurricane. As is the case with other developing countries, the needs of small island developing States cannot be addressed without the full support and cooperation of the international community.

Trinidad and Tobago continues to make every effort to provide assistance to the islands affected by this disaster, in cooperation with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, a regional agency established to deal with all types of disasters.

Trinidad and Tobago has succeeded to some extent in achieving integration into the world economy as it undertakes the transition from an oil-dependent, public-sector dominated economy to a more diversified market-oriented private-sector led one. There is still a pressing need, however, for employment-generating growth from non-traditional labour-intensive sectors which will have more pointed impact on the reduction in poverty and unemployment levels in our country.

Our people are hurting. It is imperative therefore that the United Nations programmes for development be directed more specifically towards employment creation opportunities for our peoples.

Trade policy is an important area of concentration of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Developing countries, including small island States, are being asked to compete with developed countries while unequal levels of economic development persist — and to do so in a very difficult economic environment and within unrealistic time-frames. Small States must adopt a series of policy changes to reorient their economies and diversify their production bases. While implementing these measures, they must also develop their internal capacities to deal simultaneously with such policy changes. This cannot be achieved in the short term without a high degree of support from the regional and international organizations and the international community as a whole.

It is imperative that we find innovative ways to bridge the gap between the United Nations and private citizens. It is in this context that we welcome the establishment of the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, which will strengthen partnerships to support the United Nations and its projects and deliver resources to programmes and peoples served by United Nations agencies. The approval of grants for projects in the broad categories of children's health, environment and climate change, women and population, food security, drug control, poverty alleviation and landmines will contribute significantly to the pursuit of the goals of the United Nations. The establishment of this Fund is testimony to what can be achieved by a shared vision and commitment to the principles and ideals of the Organization. We urge optimum use of the benefits to be derived from the Fund.

As we observe the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights this year, Trinidad and Tobago would like to restate its commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and the fundamental freedoms of its citizens. The Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago guarantees human rights and freedom to all its citizens, without discrimination based on race, origin, colour, religion or sex. The right to life, liberty, security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof, except by due process of law, are guaranteed by the Constitution. Also guaranteed are the right not to be subjected to cruel and unusual treatment or punishment, the right to a fair trial, freedom of expression and freedom of the press. An independent judiciary is ever vigilant to ensure that these rights are not abrogated or infringed.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is fully cognizant of its duty to protect the security and well-being of its citizens, including the innocent, the victims of violence and the vulnerable. Their rights have also been guaranteed by the Constitution. We do not subscribe to the current trend that subordinates the rights of these citizens to those of the perpetrators of violent crimes against them. We are of the view that our innocent citizens also deserve the Government's protection of their basic rights to life and security of the person.

We cannot speak of development without focusing specific attention on the problems of social development, poverty eradication and sustainable economic development. The international community must, now more than ever, jointly seek to ensure both the economic well-being and the social development of all its peoples. In this regard, the United Nations has made tremendous strides in its efforts to confront the problems of development and to improve the quality of life of humankind. We are aware that, to this end, a number of tools have been devised to enable the international community to build a consensus in the social and economic fields.

It is of special significance to Trinidad and Tobago that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/161 of 22 December 1995, a special session of the General Assembly will be convened in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and to consider further actions and initiatives.

The 10 commitments undertaken at the World Summit in Copenhagen constitute strong imperatives by Member States and the international community to achieve social development with the well-being of individuals in the society at the core. One of the commitments given priority attention at the Copenhagen Summit was the eradication of poverty. However, poverty levels remain alarmingly high, and more practical initiatives towards eradicating poverty are essential. We are pleased that the General Assembly has identified this as a priority issue and has dedicated the period 1997-2006 as the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty in order to achieve the goal of eradicating absolute poverty and reducing overall poverty substantially in the world.

The effect of globalization and its impact on social development must be carefully studied. The United Nations and its relevant bodies will be a useful forum for this discourse.

Trinidad and Tobago sees these as some of the issues which the Preparatory Committee for the special session should consider when it convenes its substantive sessions in May 1999 and April 2000 to ensure that the special session will be meaningful.

In September 1995, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, firm commitments were undertaken to improve the status of women by adopting the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Follow-up activities are under way and should continue apace vigorously to ensure that the mandates of the Beijing Conference are fully implemented. An area which requires special focus is the enhancement of women's involvement in the development process. We welcome the decision taken by the General Assembly in December 1997 to convene in the year 2000 a high-level plenary review to appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and to consider further action and initiatives.

Trinidad and Tobago attaches great significance to the rights of children. We are committed to ensuring that they are neither disadvantaged nor deprived in any fashion of the means necessary for their wholesome development and their full integration into society. Since the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Trinidad and Tobago has taken a number of measures to promote and pursue the mandates of the Convention. Steps have also been taken to achieve national awareness in this area, including the elaboration of a national Plan of Action for the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, the promotion of the rights of children through school and community outreach programmes and the establishment of a Child Registry for monitoring children in need of special protection. Measures are also being undertaken with respect to the harmonization and codification of all laws relating to children, as well as the establishment of a Family Court.

We are on a swift march towards the new millennium. Let us, as a community of nations, renew our resolve to work towards the achievement of the goals we have set for ourselves: goals of peace, security, justice and development for all. Political will and commitment are necessary for this process, as is a genuine appreciation of the realities faced by each individual member of the international community in the pursuit of these goals.

We, the Member States of the United Nations, must not lose sight of the interdependence of development and the attainment of these ideals. As we formulate new policies in our strategy for the improvement of all aspects of the lives of humankind, and as we invent new modalities for their implementation, we are encouraged by the many successes we have had, especially in recent years.

Trinidad and Tobago pledges to continue to work assiduously in its efforts to establish the foundations for a peaceful, secure and just world. This is the only legacy we must leave to future generations.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali and for Malians living abroad, His Excellency Mr. Modibo Sidibe.

Mr. Sidibe (Mali) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me first of all, on behalf of the delegation of Mali, to extend to Mr. Didier Opertti my very warm congratulations on his outstanding election to guide the work of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. To ensure the success of the lofty mission entrusted to him, I wish to assure him that he will have the full and open cooperation of my country's delegation. I would also like to congratulate his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, for the skill and ability with which he guided our work at a time when the reform of the United Nations occupied a prominent place on the agenda of our Organization.

I also take this opportunity to convey to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his team all our gratitude for their tireless commitment in the service of the ideals of the United Nations. The delegation of Mali fully appreciates his programme of reforms designed to adapt our Organization to the changing realities of the world.

The fifty-third session of the General Assembly has opened at a time when the growing impoverishment of the poorest countries, the resurgence of hotbeds of tension and the difficulties incumbent in a stronger and more united cooperation are demonstrating that the rhythm of international change is unprecedented and requires our Organization's attention.

Indeed, it would now appear that increased interdependence and the globalization of the economy are contributing heavily to the rise of new tensions and creating profound imbalances for the developing countries. The entire world, under the yoke of the logic of extreme competition, is going through a phase of profound confusion. Everywhere, North and South, workers live under the remorseless threat of market rules, which grow murkier and more pitiless every day. Financial crises are likely to undermine the developing countries' efforts at economic reform.

The imbalance between North and South is being exacerbated, the gaps are widening and differences becoming entrenched. Characterized by a disparity in income, access to services and the possibility of living in dignity, poverty is growing in the developing countries and even spreading within the developed world.

My delegation certainly believes that, if genuine social development and poverty reduction are to be achieved, strong economic growth is necessary and that the poorest countries must have access to markets in order to better participate, on a sustainable basis, in the world economy. In this respect, we welcome the Secretary-General's suggestion that the developing countries be encouraged to participate more actively in the drafting of new international standards and in ensuring that these standards be transparent. Specifically, non-tariff barriers should be eliminated for African and the least developed countries; vigorous measures should be adopted to ease the debt burden, whether by converting the public debt of the poorest countries into grants or by easing access to the Debt Initiative for the heavily indebted poor countries.

But let us make no mistake: what is truly at stake today is a globalization focused on sustainable human development. The challenge at the end of this century and into the twenty-first will be to close the gap between North and South.

In this respect, as the highest authorities have said; we are convinced that the history of humanity is the history of men. Our constant quest for man is our roadmap for the world's progress. Our struggle will always be against a blind global market and in favour of sharing and solidarity. Let us have economic growth, by all means, but let our work and its fruit be shared so as to end these inequalities. Let us not close our eyes: Where there is injustice and iniquity, there is no peace.

Respect for human and national rights is an integral factor for economic prosperity and social equity, as well as for promoting and maintaining peace and security. We can achieve such respect and right such imbalances if, through a renewed political dialogue undertaken in all responsibility and candour, we tackle the challenges with global vision and solidarity, in the conviction of true partnership and shared and equal responsibility in the building of a better world, a world of humanity.

In this context, the major challenge facing the Government of Mali today is achieving sustainable human development through the struggle against poverty. This development hinges on a strengthened process of democratization, the rule of law and the implementation of decentralization, the vehicle for local development, designed and guided by the people.

Mali is rigorously pursuing a freely agreed policy of economic reform and entrenching its democracy. The positive results of these efforts, though fragile, are very encouraging, but there remain problems and difficulties which our programmes — howsoever participatory — will require major outside assistance, peace and stability in our subregion, Africa and the world to solve. The same holds true for many countries, especially in Africa, which, through the courageous reforms they have undertaken, are once again on the road to economic growth.

Like them, we intend to continue and consolidate our economic reforms with strong growth aimed at poverty reduction. The international community, however, must reverse the trend towards decreased official development assistance, which is essential to our basic minimum needs. We pay tribute to the tireless efforts of the United Nations system and our development partners and urge an increase in official development

assistance, without which we will scarcely enjoy the benefits of our reforms, undertaken with so much sacrifice in the fight against poverty.

We also need a partnership aimed at strengthening our economic capacities to convert and market our commodities, facilitating their access to markets, promoting the resurgence of our private sectors and increasing flows of direct foreign investments. All this must take place in a more favourable economic environment if unemployment and poverty are to be consistently reduced.

The end of the cold war transformed the international context for United Nations missions and activities. In the sphere of international peace and security, our Organization is now taken up with domestic conflicts that often have serious international repercussions. Unfortunately, in many cases, recent events allow us to assume that this type of conflict will continue to claim our attention.

Now that certain guiding principles in the area of peace and security are widely accepted, it is quite obvious that peacekeeping will remain our priority objective. It is therefore essential that we improve our preventive system and strengthen our institution's capacity to organize and lead these operations efficiently and successfully.

For its part, Mali will always fight for more peace, justice and solidarity throughout the world. For us, security and development are indissoluble. The grave crises shaking the world, and Africa in particular, strengthen our conviction that the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the subregional organizations must cooperate closely with one another in the search for effective early warning, conflict prevention and management, and peacekeeping mechanisms. In this framework, and with particular reference to Africa, the prevention of conflicts and disarmament are of great concern.

Given all of the challenges of democracy, development and security that Africa must meet, President Alpha Oumar Konaré of the Republic of Mali said a few weeks ago that:

> "The development of the continent must be managed on new terms. The difficult situation of our continent has arisen almost everywhere as a result of democratic failures, which we must redress in our young and fragile democracies by an essential democratic commitment. We must promote pluralistic expression, the transfer of power and dialogue founded on law. We must eschew violence.
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> "The future of our continent does not lie in the emergence of ethnic republics, which will only lead us into general anarchy. It is important, we feel, not to deny, much less crush expressions of autonomy. They must be managed politically in a democratic context of the basic transfer of power and the emergence of local power with a view towards regional integration.
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> "Thirty-eight years after the independence won in 1960, there is no question of redrawing the borders inherited from colonialism, but nothing today can justify border conflicts. We must be able to settle all border disputes politically. It is essential today that any ill-defined border be corrected in serenity, not in the heat of tension. The OAU's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution should be able to speed that forward.
>
> "At a time when everyone is welcoming integration, borders must have a different meaning. They must be managed as border countries, joint areas and shared space."

President Konaré also said that:

> "Post-election periods are also increasingly becoming times of conflict. This must be prevented by the proper preparation for elections, because some recent incidents of electoral challenge have threatened democracy. People must know that the only access to power is through the ballot box, whence all legitimacy flows. Everyone must participate.
>
> "We must therefore seek to control electoral challenges without ever endangering pluralistic expression and the transfer of power. Strength must always reside in law and right — the whole law and right and nothing but law and right — and oppose any impulse to disorder and violence."

In the view of the President of the Republic of Mali,

> "Africa can no longer be managed as it has been since 1960. A new Africa is on the move, an Africa which wishes to define its future and take responsibility for its own development; which is searching for solidarity, not alms; which is

responsible and confident. It is an Africa once and for all on its own feet, a democratic Africa."

That Africa more than ever needs security and peace. To have that security and peace, Africa must, like the rest of the world, be free from weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, particularly light weapons.

With regard to disarmament, Mali hails the decisions of the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in particular on the Treaty's permanent extension. We also hail the entry into force on 29 April 1997 of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the progress in negotiations regarding the Biological Weapons Convention. We warmly welcome the coming entry into force of the Convention on anti-personnel landmines. Mali, which ratified this Convention early on, began last May destroying its stocks, which Mali's army had never used.

While welcoming also the notable progress made on instruments regarding weapons of mass destruction, Mali is deeply concerned about conventional weapons, which remain an area so far unexplored and not subject to international norms. Recent conflicts, particularly in Africa, which have claimed so many human lives, are fuelled not by weapons of mass destruction, but by light weapons. That is why my country, together with the United Nations and the countries of the West African subregion, has undertaken specific initiatives to counter this phenomenon.

We are pleased by the welcome given to President Konaré's initiative regarding the moratorium on the import, export and production of light weapons by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and more recently by the Organization of African Unity during the Ouagadougou summit and by the Non-Aligned Movement at the Durban summit. But it is important now to go further to reduce and contain the threat of the proliferation of light weapons. This moratorium is in essence a confidence-building measure, aiming over the long term to strengthen the ability of the Governments involved to exert stricter control over the illegal traffic in light weapons.

Here we wish to pay tribute to the far-sightedness and responsible commitment of the ECOWAS countries, which plan to announce a moratorium soon. This will be a precedent demonstrating Africa's clear will to prevent conflicts by exerting pressure on the means which incite and fuel them. The international community must keep up the momentum by mobilizing around the issue of light weapons, supporting the moratorium and making it effective by implementing a programme of coordination and assistance for security and development, which underpin the moratorium and help to widen it.

We are an active party, and we support the proposals that emerge daily for tracking the illegal traffic in light weapons and establishing a control mechanism. Although it is a complex and difficult matter, we must work together energetically to perfect such a mechanism.

There must be more support for resolution 52/38 C, regarding assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them, and States must demand more on this issue of the international community and the United Nations, which we congratulate on the action already taken. We must show our commitment to make vigorous progress in creating a mechanism to curb this matter and, at the same time, actively support initiatives such as the moratorium, consciousness-raising and the mobilization of all State and non-State actors to better ensure peace and reduce the threat posed by this illegal proliferation to people, particularly women and children, and to States and democracy.

On behalf of the delegation of Mali, I would like once again to voice our solidarity with and compassion for all the peoples of the world who are still living in conflict situations.

Regarding the Middle East, we are deeply concerned over the deadlock in the peace process and the policy of fait accompli aimed at changing the religious, civil and historic character of the Holy City of Al-Quds. The agreements concluded on the basis of "land for peace" must be implemented. We reaffirm our unswerving support for the just struggle of the fraternal Palestinian people to realize their legitimate right to self-determination and to establish an independent State.

We remain convinced that in Angola scrupulous respect for the Lusaka Protocol is the only path to lasting peace and reconciliation. I wish once again to honour the memory of Maître Alioune Blondin Beye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and the seven members of his team who tragically perished on the road to peace in Angola.

We have continually voiced our grave concern about the suffering of the fraternal people of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya as a result of the embargo imposed on it. While noting recent events, we should like to recall the

decision taken by the heads of State or Government of the OAU at their recent summit and to reaffirm that the time has come to end the suffering of the fraternal Libyan people by lifting the embargo and finding a lasting solution.

Concerned about acts of terrorism, which we condemn in all its forms, Mali firmly condemned the lethal attacks against diplomatic missions of the United States in Dar-es-Salaam and Nairobi. We reiterate our condolences to the families of the victims and call for greater international cooperation to prevent and combat this threat. We also call for the convening of an international conference on terrorism under the aegis of the United Nations, whose exclusive competence in the area of international peace and security we need increasingly to reaffirm.

I would like to conclude on the issue of the expansion of the Security Council. Clearly this body, which was conceived in a context quite different from today's, cannot be left untouched in the course of reform. My delegation endorses the demands of Africa for democratization and an equitable distribution of the two categories of seats, permanent and non-permanent, with all the prerogatives and powers that go with them.

We are convinced that a restructured United Nations, democratic and given essential powers, can help ensure a more orderly management of world affairs by eliminating the injustices, disparities and selfishness which threaten mankind, so that nations can finally, in a spirit of solidarity, devote their resources and their energy to the progress and development of mankind.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea, His Excellency Mr. Miguel Oyono Ndong Mifumu, on whom I now call.

Mr. Oyono Ndong Mifumu (Equatorial Guinea) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First of all, I would like to express to Mr. Didier Opertti the sincere congratulations of the delegation of Equatorial Guinea on his unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to congratulate Ambassador Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine and to express my appreciation for the enormous amount of work he accomplished as President at the last session.

May I also reiterate to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, our brother Kofi Annan, my country's support for the efforts he is making to find viable solutions to conflicts in various parts of the world, and particularly in Africa. I would like to encourage him to continue with the reforms he has undertaken to adapt and restructure the United Nations.

Once again, we are gathered here to consider and reflect on the great challenges humanity is confronting and will have to continue to confront at the threshold of the new millennium. Every year in this same forum we see that the same causes produce the same effects, but solutions are slow to arrive. The fact is that we are all victims of our own contradictions.

From this rostrum, we have been repeating for the past 50 years that humankind wants no more wars, that it wants a lasting peace. Nevertheless, the large industrial complexes continue to produce more weapons that are increasingly sophisticated and deadly.

We are assured that the priority at the end of the century is the fight against poverty and the underdevelopment of nations in the framework of the globalization of our economies. Yet the problems of hunger, malnutrition, disease and unemployment are assuming alarming proportions, and in many cases the growth of these problems is even more apparent than in the past. In the meantime, the peoples of the world continue to wait, and their future is filled with uncertainty.

Let us be honest: disarmament is possible only if the large weapons-producing complexes are dismantled. To claim the contrary is pure contradiction. Disarmament requires the same approach as the fight against drugs — in other words, the destruction of the centres of production, distribution and sale. There is no need for me to elaborate on this issue, since the solution is in the hands of those who benefit from this illicit trade.

However, I do wish to refer to two questions that are the subject of debate at this session of the General Assembly: the phenomenon of globalization and the fight against terrorism.

In connection with the former, we have serious doubts and questions regarding the sincerity of this dialogue among nations. On the one hand, we have those who offer many pretexts for continuing to obstruct free trade, the free circulation of goods and persons and the

transfer of technology, and who erect other barriers that prevent the developing countries from achieving sustainable economic growth.

As for the African continent, we all know that the Uruguay Round is an instrument for marginalizing the developing countries, nor are we unaware that the payment of foreign debt remains a means of exporting capital precisely to those who do not need it. Under these circumstances, how can we devise an agenda for the globalization of economic relations between the developed North and the developing South, in a framework of fairness?

Globalization must begin with fair prices for our raw materials. The immense opportunities and advantages offered to the world markets by the developing countries of Africa must be put to use in the context of a sincere partnership between North and South. No one has chosen marginalization. The question is, should it be forced on us?

Some detractors of the African continent apply simplistic reasoning when they categorically state that the principle causes of poverty and marginalization in Africa are political in nature: poor governance, corruption and armed conflict.

Without trying to discard these arguments, we believe that they do not justify the unfair treatment of our raw materials in the most profitable markets of the North. Nor do we believe that the marginalization now suffered by the African continent is an inevitable phenomenon. A great deal is being done to inscribe our countries in the current agenda of globalization. The ongoing processes of subregional and regional integration are evidence of the political will that today infuses African leaders.

We wonder about the degree of sincerity and transparency in the dialogue aimed at facilitating the full integration of the African economies into the mechanisms for globalization of trade and into technological advances. As for globalization, it should mean that everyone sells what he has and wherever he wishes, without the customs, administrative and tariff barriers that today prevent the free access of the products of the South to the markets of the North.

Furthermore, the ever present issue of foreign debt remains an obstacle to economic growth in many developing countries.

My country, Equatorial Guinea, sincerely believes that this situation is not fortuitous, and far less is it due to a lack of potential or a lack of opportunity. What we call for is not simply assistance. We want our own efforts to be valued; we want use to be made of the various opportunities we can offer to the world of globalization that lies ahead.

Nevertheless, all of this also requires the peace and socio-political stability of nations. Unfortunately, it would seem that everything is being done to create instability in our countries. Today, we are seriously threatened from outside and within our borders by terrorism and mercenary actions carried out by individuals or groups blinded by hunger for power, ethnic hatred, racism and the desire for hegemony.

For the first time in its history, my country has experienced, in the course of the past 18 months, two acts of armed destabilization. One was on 17 May 1997, when a ship carrying arms and mercenaries was detained by the Angolan police in its territorial waters. The other was on 21 January of this year, when a group of individuals attacked a number of towns in my country and murdered six persons in cold blood.

What justification can there be for terrorist actions such as those perpetrated against the United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania? What justification can there be for a band of terrorists who murder peaceful citizens in cold blood? What political claims can justify the murder and mutilation of another human being, as occurred in my country?

On this question, some countries present here are acting with a double standard; depending on their own interests, terrorist actions are justifiable or not. When these actions take place within a developing country, some powerful communications media invoke, among other such fallacies, the "struggle for the freedom of peoples" to do away with regimes that, according to them, are dictatorial. But when similar actions of the same type take place in any country of the North, then the story changes, and those responsible for such actions are called terrorists and enemies of society.

That double standard was evident when such actions received the support and solidarity of certain Spanish political groups and elements of the Spanish communications media. Only the Government of that country condemned those acts. On the other hand, a lobby was formed from among several political parties —

the Basque Nationalist Party, the United Left and the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party — each of which published communiqués expressing their solidarity with the perpetrators of those terrorist acts. Since then, those same groups have been trying to fabricate an ethnic problem in my country. They have promoted a number of resolutions against my country in various international forums, including in recent meetings of the European Parliament and the Joint Assembly of the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, in a clear attempt to justify the terrorist acts in question.

My Government, however, faithful to its commitment to establish a State based on the rule of law in Equatorial Guinea, held a public trial, with procedural guarantees and international observers. Furthermore, the 15 death sentences imposed on the main perpetrators of those crimes have been commuted by the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, in an effort to preserve the social unity of the nation. But it seems that such measures still do not satisfy the political circles that are persisting in their attempts to destabilize the peaceful people of Equatorial Guinea.

Nevertheless, I would like to assure the Assembly that, thanks to the maturity of the people of Equatorial Guinea and because of their peaceful spirit and openness to dialogue and democratic debate, we have been free from the serious upheavals experienced by some countries and regions of our continent as a result of such actions.

The internal realities of Equatorial Guinea therefore bear no relation to the systematic campaign of hounding and harassment that has been waged against it for several years. Peace and stability prevail, investments are flowing in and there are real signs of growth. The political reforms are irreversible, our State of law is being strengthened and the better governance of the country is being promoted. To that end, the Government of Equatorial Guinea has relations of cooperation with several international organizations and friendly countries for the establishment of technical assistance programmes in the fields of economics, democracy, human rights and governance. We are continuing to cooperate with the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and our cooperation with the international financial institutions is positive in the areas to which I have referred.

We are clearly living during a time of promise and rebirth in our country. We appeal here to the international community to show its solidarity by supporting our efforts to consolidate the democratic process and the implementation of the plan for the socio-economic development of the country, outlined by the national economic conference, which took place in Bata from 8 to 14 September 1997.

With regard to the African continent, we urge the international community to find mechanisms geared to achieving a ceasefire and ending the hostilities in the Great Lakes region and to restoring peace and order in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Eritrea and Ethiopia. To that end, we wish to reaffirm here the recommendations contained in the Bata declaration for the promotion of democracy, peace and sustainable development in Africa, which was adopted by the subregional conference on democratic institutions and peace in Central Africa, held from 18 to 21 May 1998 under the auspices of the United Nations, at which the President of Equatorial Guinea recommended the creation of a subregional parliament to deal with issues so as to guarantee peace and security in the subregion. Equatorial Guinea pledges to make its contribution to the attainment of that objective.

Finally, my country reaffirms its support for the necessary reform of the Security Council. With regard to the increase of its membership, we are in favour of equitable distribution so that our Organization will be able faithfully to reflect the geopolitical realities of today's world. In this context, Equatorial Guinea associates itself with the position, adopted at the twelfth summit of the non-aligned countries held a month ago in Durban, South Africa, that Africa should have two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats, in the interests of the credibility and democratization of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Madagascar, Her Excellency Mrs. Lila Hanitra Ratsifandrihamanana, on whom I now call.

Mrs. Ratsifandrihamanana (Madagascar) (*interpretation from French*): The General Assembly has unanimously chosen Mr. Opertti to direct the work of its fifty-third session. Echoing previous speakers, I should like to congratulate him, as I consider his election a tribute to his personal qualities as a diplomat and a statesman. Through me, Madagascar is pleased to express its best wishes for the success of his mission.

His predecessor, whose competence we valued, was able to rely on our cooperation throughout his term of

office; and Mr. Opertti may also be assured of our complete support in his efforts to accomplish his task successfully.

Madagascar reiterates its encouragement and support to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in his quest for ways and means to make our Organization increasingly dynamic.

The great family of the United Nations is meeting once again, as it does every year, to reflect collectively on the situation in the world so as to lay the foundations for a better existence, one which is safer and more equitable, in spite of all our differences and divergences.

Madagascar reaffirms its support for the United Nations though its presence every year at this annual gathering. For us, this forum for exchanging views represents the first, universal bastion against injustice and violence in the world, and it is the best tool for safeguarding peace and security and for the promotion of progress.

In the light of the statements made here, globalization undoubtedly constitutes the backdrop for our many concerns at this end of the century. With all its advantages, disadvantages and disappointments, and transcending the limits of the economic framework, globalization is today expressing itself in terms of insecurity.

Insecurity is spreading virtually everywhere, in many forms and manifestations. Insecurity is being globalized, and whenever a man dies — whether it be in a war, or as a bombing victim, or in a cold-blooded massacre, or simply in his sickbed — somewhere children cry, women suffer by the hundreds, by the thousands, by the millions. And death is more than ever part of our daily lives. This is why today we are focusing our attention on the problems of insecurity and on the need to rally our efforts for the maintenance of peace.

The international community is now confronting situations that jeopardize peace and security and that threaten the sustainable development of nations. In many parts of the world, civil wars, inter-State conflicts, border disputes, and ethnic, tribal and religious confrontations resurface, bringing suffering, poverty, political instability and marginalization, be it in Kosovo, the Comoros, the Great Lakes region or elsewhere.

Added to this is the persistence of new threats, such as international terrorism, organized crime, corruption, the proliferation of narcotic drugs and the deterioration of the environment. Access to weapons of mass destruction is becoming easier and easier. The proliferation of the light-weapons industry and the widespread use of those weapons are becoming a major scourge for most countries.

Insecurity is economic as well as social. In the era of technological progress and of the spectacular growth in world food production, whole regions are experiencing famine and malnutrition. One quarter of the world's population is still living in poverty. Millions of children under the age of five continue to die of diseases, and major sectors of society are cut off from education and from basic health care. About 180 million children under the age of 14 are obliged to work; the less fortunate have no alternative except sexual exploitation, and for many young people unemployment is the only prospect for the future. Similarly, a large number of women cannot to this very day exercise their fundamental rights. Many remain victims of domestic violence, social injustice, deliberate massacres or armed conflict.

Moreover, the financial upheaval that has afflicted South-East Asia, Latin America and Russia has shaken the international economic system. It is true that global information networks have reduced both distances and time, but at the same time they have contributed to increasing scientific, cultural and moral insecurity. Computer viruses have become as dangerous as nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. All of this illustrates the magnitude and the drawbacks of globalization, as well as the scope of the interdependence of States.

Fifty years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the rights and freedoms inherent in the dignity and worth of the human person are still often violated, and we witness the burgeoning of new challenges — challenges that are ever different and that require well-adapted and better-planned strategies. It is obvious that no State in the world can guarantee each of its citizens material and spiritual well-being in conditions of peace and full respect for the most basic rights and freedoms.

While in the recent past — and more specifically in 1985, from this same rostrum — emphasis was placed on the balance of forces, in general, and on nuclear parity, in particular, everyone today unanimously recognizes that security cannot exist without cooperation and solidarity, which implies spectacular changes in international relations. Evidence of this recognition is the forthcoming

entry into force, on 1 March 1999, of the international Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, as well as the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

For its part, Madagascar, which has never deviated from its commitment to disarmament and which is, in this respect, a signatory of a number of international Conventions, is gratified at the prospects of the negotiation of a cut-off treaty on fissile material for military purposes in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

We also welcome the call for the holding in the near future of an international conference on the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, a call made by the heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries who met recently in Durban. Along the same lines, Madagascar of course associates itself with the proposal made by President Blaise Compaoré, the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), concerning the convening in the year 2000 of a summit conference under the auspices of the United Nations with a view to the formulation by the international community of a joint response to the problem of terrorism.

Like other States, on 18 July, in Rome, Madagascar signed the Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as the Final Act of the Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries.

It would be appropriate to consider the question of security through a multidimensional approach encompassing military, economic and social aspects at various levels — international, regional and national.

Poverty and the persistence of imbalances that divide the world into developed countries, developing countries, least developed countries, poor and indebted countries, are factors contributing to tension and obstacles to the establishment of a genuine and lasting peace. This, in any event, is the reality in Africa, my continent.

The Cairo Declaration of 1993 established the primary objective of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa. Nonetheless, without the active support of the international community, these actions would remain ineffective. Security Council resolution 1170 (1998), on the holding of regular ministerial meetings in order to evaluate actions undertaken for peace in Africa, should therefore be welcomed. For Madagascar, it is a question of confirming the will to coordinate actions of the United Nations with the pan-African organization and with regional mechanisms.

While awaiting an appropriate mobilization of the resources needed for the effective implementation of actions in the framework of the Agenda for Development, it seems to us vital that the developing countries make their contribution by proposing the establishment of a mechanism to help them attain their shared aspirations and affirm their solidarity.

It is in this spirit that the Heads of State and Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, meeting at Durban, considered a proposal to establish, within the Non-Aligned Movement, a mechanism consisting of three funds financed by our own resources, up to perhaps 0.1 per cent of gross national product or a percentage of export income. The funds thus obtained would be capitalized through investment in international financial markets.

For Madagascar, this mechanism would help integrate the activities of developing countries into the process of financial globalization and would help resolve, at least in part, their financial and debt problems, in tandem with the actions undertaken by the international community and the financial institutions. A large number of speakers during that session recommended an evaluation of the capacity of the Bretton Woods institutions to adapt to current realities. The three-fund mechanism could be among the basic documents for joint reflection on a new global financial architecture.

In implementing the resolutions of the international community, it is a key responsibility of each country to create a climate conducive to lasting peace and economic growth. Among the elements of this responsibility are the establishment of regulations that are in keeping with agreed aspirations, good governance, the creation of adequate systems for follow-up and monitoring, and respect for the rules of democracy. In the present context of global economic liberalization, every development actor has its own role to play, including the State as the protector of the fundamental rights of its people and of its sovereignty and as a catalyst for development programmes.

Madagascar, whose Constitution and national laws are based on the principles of the United Nations Charter, endorses those values. In that connection, we are engaged in the process of democratization, good

governance and the rule of law, along with economic and structural reforms, to lead our country towards credible partnership in the international system. Our authorities are now committed to implementing recovery programmes aimed at stepping up the struggle against poverty and at creating a climate conducive to the complete fulfilment of the citizen.

The institutional aspects of this programme include the establishment of autonomous provinces and of institutions provided for in the Constitution, and the continued reform of the civil service and the judiciary system.

In the economic sphere, the State is continuing to pull out of the production sector, and will be doing all in its power to create an environment of vigour and competition and to put financial administration on a sound footing through the creation of bodies to regulate sector-based activities.

Finally, in the social area, public expenditures will reflect our priorities: education, health and safety, and security. We are devoting special attention to programmes to make the most disadvantaged segments of the population aware of their own responsibilities.

Although the implementation of this programme depends first and foremost on Madagascar's own efforts, it is obvious that there are limits on our resources for guaranteeing a better quality of life for our citizens and thus for protecting their rights. The strengthening of international partnership should therefore be viewed not only from the financial but also from the scientific and technological standpoints, so that all countries may hope for an equal chance of success. Of that I am convinced.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Haile Weldensae, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea.

Mr. Weldensae (Eritrea): I wish to join those who have spoken before me in congratulating Mr. Didier Opertti on his election to the presidency of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. His vast experience and skill assure us that he will guide the deliberations of the Assembly to a successful end. I assure him of the full support of my delegation as he carries out his important mandate.

Let me also take this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, for his outstanding leadership during his tenure last session.

The Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, deserves appreciation for his commendable efforts and for the effective leadership he has provided to ensure the realization of the ideals of our Organization by making the United Nations more effective and better able to serve its Members.

The end of the cold war, even if only briefly, raised hopes and expectations and sent tidings of a more peaceful, safer, just and fair world safeguarded from conflict and tension, hunger and disease. Such hopes and expectations were to be frustrated rather early as the world was plunged in numerous conflicts between and with States, ethnic violence and hatred, terrorism, gross violations of human rights, racism and xenophobia, as well as mass starvation and an increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons.

The international community cannot dismiss or, much less, ignore this situation, which in some cases has caused the commission of serious international crimes, not only because it is generally the innocent and the weak — women, children and the elderly — who are the first victims, but also because this situation, which now seems to be limited to certain regions, may soon engulf wider areas of the world. In the face of these harsh realities, it is incumbent on the United Nations and the international community to search for fresh, innovative approaches with a view to eliminating the root causes of this situation, in order to ensure respect for the basic principles of the Charter, to save the innocent from the scourge of terrorism and to protect the human and civil rights of ethnic minorities. If they fail to do so, it will not only prolong the agony of the victims but will, in fact, sooner or later, threaten regional as well as international peace and security.

The founding fathers of our Organization recognized economic development as one of humanity's inalienable rights, and set as one of the goals of the United Nations the promotion of social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. I am certain that all developing countries would declare in no uncertain terms that this goal has so far been unattained.

The situation in Africa is cause for serious concern. In spite of the great efforts exerted by regional and subregional organizations and agencies, the situation in many parts of the continent is deteriorating and becoming

more dangerous by the day. The tragic bloodshed and suffering that Africans have witnessed in the recent past in various parts of the continent are too horrible to recite. They must not recur and, where they continue to exist, they must be stopped.

In the Great Lakes region, conflicts are developing much wider ramifications, in spite of their seeming regional containment. They pose a grave threat to peace and security, as they may soon involve extraregional Powers. It is hoped that through ongoing regional initiatives it will be possible to formulate just and mutually acceptable solutions. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Africans and the rest of the world have been forced to witness the disheartening spectacle of an African country which had barely emerged from the cruel destruction of a rapacious dictatorship being once again ravaged by multifaceted fighting. This has also divided the broad African coalition which had contributed to the promotion of peace and security in that country. This sad state of affairs must be quickly reversed on the basis of full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and a recognition that the internal political process is the sole prerogative of the Congolese people, and with awareness of the need for a regional framework of cooperation to address the security concerns of the countries of the region.

Somalia and the Sudan continue to be sources of anguish and sorrow for Africa, because there is still a lack of progress in the efforts to resolve the crises in both countries. The frustration of the international community at the lack of progress in peacemaking in both countries is understandable. It must be noted, however, that genuine efforts continue to be made by the countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the international community must not despair or give up, but must contribute to the efforts of these countries if they are to be successful. In this connection, my delegation upholds the view that with regard to the Sudan conflict IGAD's Declaration of Principles and consequent resolutions remain the sound basis for a just and lasting solution to the conflict.

In my statement last year I declared that Eritrea's foreign policy rested on two basic tenets. The first was the deep conviction that where there is goodwill all disputes can be resolved through peaceful negotiations and methods without recourse to violence. The second tenet was the unswerving devotion of Eritrea to justice and equality. I also declared that these two tenets have influenced our search for friendship and cooperation with our neighbours, as well as with other States. This statement is as valid today as it was last year.

The commitment of the Government of Eritrea to these two tenets has helped to defuse conflict with the Republic of Yemen and to arrive at a mutual understanding to resolve the dispute over the Eritrean archipelago of Hanish-Zukar in the Red Sea by peaceful means through arbitration.

Today, too, the Government of Eritrea insists that the road to peace with Ethiopia is by a strict application and enforcement of the principles of the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), as well as the OAU decision on colonial borders. Once again, Eritrea calls upon the international community, particularly the United Nations and the OAU, to ensure respect for these principles and the decision.

Eritrea was surprised and disturbed by the eruption of conflict with Ethiopia because, in spite of disagreements on the issue of boundaries, dating back to the days of armed struggle the Eritrean Government had assumed and hoped that in view of the close relations between the two countries, it was possible to arrive at an amicable and enduring solution.

The responsibility for the escalation of the dispute rests solely with the Government of Ethiopia, which has for a long period of time consistently violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Eritrea, resulting in the occupation of large tracts of Eritrean territory, followed by the forced displacement of Eritrean peasants and the replacement of Eritrean administrative structures by Ethiopian institutions. It reached a climax on 6 May only as a result of the further unprovoked incursions by members of the Ethiopian armed forces, which attacked Eritrean troops in the Badme region, in south-western Eritrea. These incursions were premeditated and meticulously planned. This is the root cause of the dispute.

For a long time Eritreans had opted for patient and quiet diplomacy. They had hoped against hope that the periodic incursions were only the petty acts of some miscreant and ill-advised regional officials. It was only at a very late stage — and particularly after the publication in 1997 of an official map of the Tigray administrative zone incorporating additional indisputably Eritrean territory and after the issuance of the new Ethiopian currency note depicting the same map — that they

realized the full meaning of the Ethiopian adventure. Yet, even in the aftermath of the fighting that was triggered by the unprovoked Ethiopian incursion and attacks on Eritrean troops, Eritrea never crossed its internationally recognized border; but Ethiopia still controls other Eritrean territory in south-western Eritrea.

In spite of all this evidence of its aggressive deeds, the Ethiopian Government is conducting an absurd propaganda campaign to portray Eritrea as a warmongering nation which has committed aggression against, and occupies, Ethiopian territory. Nothing could be further from the truth. At no time have Eritrean troops crossed Eritrea's internationally recognized borders as everybody can see. On the contrary, it was Ethiopian troops that invaded Eritrea after Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's declaration of war on 13 May 1998. They were repulsed. It is important to note that the Deputy Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, Dr. Tekeda Alemu, had articulated Ethiopia's expansionist designs by publicly declaring in a speech to members of the Ethiopian community in the United States that Ethiopia would occupy the Eritrean port of Assab within a short time. In the light of the above, Ethiopia's claims that it is the victim of aggression and will not negotiate unless Eritrea withdraws from "its territory" are obviously false and only meant to hoodwink the international community and to cover up its own acts of aggression.

Even today, Ethiopia is threatening war unless Eritrea withdraws unconditionally from territories which are fully within its internationally recognized borders. Today virtually the whole of the Ethiopian army has taken positions along the Eritrean border, and almost all of the highest leaders of Ethiopia, including the President, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, the President of the Tigray region and a Senior Official of the TPLF have publicly declared in just the past few days that Ethiopia has finalized war preparations and will soon teach Eritreans lessons they will never forget.

It is regrettable, therefore, that all the goodwill and efforts of the Eritrean Government, consisting of several constructive proposals, to bring about a peaceful and legal settlement of the present border dispute with Ethiopia, on the basis of the OAU resolution on colonial borders, have been consistently rejected by the Ethiopian Government, which obdurately pursues a policy which is committed to the settlement of matters by military means. The Ethiopian Government has also rejected all overtures by third parties for a peaceful solution of the dispute and all calls made by the international community to seek a peaceful solution.

This expansionist and aggressive policy is underscored by the use or threat of force, as well as a massive and malicious propaganda campaign against Eritrea. The propaganda campaign accents ethnic hatred and vituperation against and slander of the Eritrean people and members of the Eritrean Government. It also calls upon the Eritrean people to rise up against their Government.

At the same time, the Ethiopian Government has been systematically and wilfully violating the most sacred and cherished provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the two International Covenants and several other international human rights instruments, as well as the principles enshrined in the United Nations and OAU Charters, by deporting or expelling more than 20,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin under extremely unhealthy conditions or dumping them in very dangerous places, and by deliberately separating family members, exposing them to inhuman, cruel and degrading treatment and confiscating their property. These acts have been well documented by third parties, including members of United Nations agencies, heads of mission of member States of the European Union and several non-governmental organizations.

Yet the Ethiopian Government, in an amazingly refined application of the Orwellian principle, accuses the Eritrean Government of precisely the outrages and atrocities it itself has been committing against Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin. The truth is that the Eritrean Government has not detained, expelled, deported or otherwise violated the rights — human or otherwise — of Ethiopians living in Eritrea. This has been verified by legitimate third parties like representatives of the European Union, United Nations agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). As usual, the Ethiopian Government has called all of them liars. We have hitherto extended an invitation to all interested parties to carry out an on-the-spot verification of the human rights conditions in both Eritrea and Ethiopia. We now extend this invitation to members of the Assembly. We also would like them to receive a similar invitation from the Ethiopian Government.

This dispute is about borders, pure and simple. Any effort to transmute it into anything else must be viewed as only a vain and brazen attempt by the Ethiopian Government to camouflage its aggression and its

expansionist policies. In this connection, it must be made clear that it was the Ethiopian Government which wilfully violated Eritrea's colonial boundaries and forcefully occupied those areas that it had incorporated into its new map of Tigray. It was the Ethiopian Government which subverted all Eritrean efforts to defuse the crisis and to find a peaceful bilateral solution through their Joint Border Commission by unleashing unprovoked military attacks on Eritrea from 6 to 12 May. It was the Ethiopian Government which declared war on Eritrea by a resolution of its Parliament on 13 May. It was the Government of Ethiopia which invaded Eritrea along several points on their common border. It was the Government of Ethiopia which launched an air strike on Asmara, the Eritrean capital, on 5 June 1998. It was the Ethiopian Government which imposed an air and sea blockade by threatening indiscriminate air bombing of Eritrea.

Yet Ethiopia has falsely portrayed Eritrea as an aggressor country by claiming that Eritrean forces invaded Ethiopian territory on 12 May. However, it is not claims and counter-claims that matter. There is incontrovertible material evidence which establishes that Ethiopia has deliberately used force and carried out military incursions in Eritrea since July 1997 with a view to covertly changing the reality on the ground. In this connection, I wish to bring to the Assembly's attention that the Eritrean Government has repeatedly called for an independent investigation of the incidents that triggered the conflict.

This border dispute should not have existed in the first place, considering that boundaries between the two States are some of the most clearly defined in Africa and were made by explicit and detailed provisions of international treaties. They were then confirmed by the United Nations when it created the ill-fated Eritrean-Ethiopian federation, and again clearly defined in the Constitution that the United Nations gave to Eritrea.

True, the borders may not have been demarcated; but they are not the only undemarcated borders in Africa, and the non-demarcation of boundaries has not prevented most African — and indeed other — States from living in peace with their neighbours and from solving their problems peacefully.

Eritrea is committed to a peaceful and legal solution of this dispute on the basis of the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of States which are enshrined in the charters of both the United Nations and the OAU as well as the decisions and declarations of the OAU and the Non-Aligned Movement. Since before the onset of the crisis, Eritrea has been attempting to initiate numerous bilateral discussions with Ethiopia with a view to addressing all outstanding issues related to their common borders. In this connection, the following must be mentioned.

First, the Eritrean Cabinet and National Assembly issued orders, on 14 and 20 May 1998 and again on 18 June 1998, respectively, for the temporary demilitarization of the areas of dispute.

Secondly, the Eritrean President sent two letters to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia requesting him to join him in defusing the dispute and settling the border issue peacefully and legally on a bilateral basis.

Thirdly, the Eritrean Government presented to the OAU Committee of Ambassadors a proposal containing the principles of respect of colonial boundaries and non-violation of these borders; respect of the charters of the OAU and the United Nations; commitment not to use force to impose a solution; commitment to peaceful and legal means to solve the dispute; readiness to stop all hostilities; and readiness to enter into direct talks without preconditions.

Unfortunately, all our efforts failed because of negative responses from Ethiopia. On the other hand, Ethiopia has yet to offer a single plan or peace proposal. It has only threatened war unless Eritrea withdraws from territories which are within the internationally recognized borders of Eritrea. In this connection, it must be mentioned that the Eritrean Government has time and again requested the Ethiopian Government to publicly announce to the peoples of Eritrea, Ethiopia and the international community the territories that it claims and to designate them on a political map with clear geographical coordinates.

It is for these reasons that the Government of Eritrea yet again offers the following as a basis for the solution of the dispute.

First, the comprehensive solution of the problem through a technical demarcation on the basis of the established colonial treaties that clearly define the boundary between the two countries.

Secondly, a possible resort to arbitration on the basis of the sanctity of colonial borders in the event that this is demanded by the other party.

Pending a lasting, legal solution, an immediate cessation of all hostilities and a ceasefire to be monitored by an observer force under the auspices of the United Nations.

It is a matter of satisfaction to the people and Government of Eritrea that numerous governmental institutions, international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations, including the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, the European Union and the Non-Aligned Movement, have, in welcoming the Eritrean initiative, called upon both Eritrea and Ethiopia to avoid the use of force at all costs and to resolve their disputes peacefully.

I wish to declare here and now, in loud and clear terms, that the Government of Eritrea welcomes, and is ready to undertake to implement, a decision by the Assembly which provides without any preconditions for the cessation of hostilities, a ceasefire agreement and a peaceful resolution of the dispute by any method as the only acceptable solution.

In Africa, conflicts such as the present Eritrean-Ethiopian border dispute have taken place several times in the past. Each one of these conflicts was addressed on the basis of the hallowed principles and decisions of the OAU, including in particular respect for colonial borders, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and the non-use of force or threat of force.

As the OAU prepares itself to enter the twenty-first century, it is imperative that its member States rededicate themselves to the sublime principles and resolutions that have hitherto served our continent. These principles and decisions, which have successfully fostered peace and stability, solved conflicts and defused tension in our continent in the past, will be as valid in the future as they have been since they were first articulated. Only through their proper application will it be possible to defuse tension and eliminate conflict.

Eritrea reiterates its commitment to peace, harmony and the rule of law in international relations, however painful this tragedy may be. Eritrea seeks peace for itself and for all of its neighbours. Eritrea will continue to seek good relations with all its neighbours.

Eritrea is in a race against the clock of development and cannot afford to lose the time, energy and resources which must be used in the war against underdevelopment. To date, Eritrea has restrained itself against extreme provocation, and it will continue to do so unless it is forced to defend itself. If aggression is committed against their country, however, Eritreans will have no choice but to defend their hard-won independence and sovereignty as well as every inch of their territory with whatever is at their disposal.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/53/PV.26

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-third Session

26th plenary meeting
Friday, 2 October 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 118 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/53/345/Add.6)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In a letter contained in document A/53/345/Add.6, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in document A/53/345 and addenda 1 through 5, Equatorial Guinea has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The first speaker is His Excellency Mr. Delfim da Silva, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Guinea-Bissau on whom I now call.

Mr. Da Silva (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from French text furnished by the delegation*): On behalf of the delegation of Guinea-Bissau, I am pleased to extend our congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. I am particularly pleased because it is unanimously agreed that you have exceptional intellectual, political and diplomatic qualities which will ensure the success of our deliberations. It also gives me pleasure to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, and to thank him for his dynamism and initiative and for the integrity which he displayed throughout his mandate.

I wish to reiterate to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, our appreciation for the tangible results we have seen in the Organization since his election, and to encourage him to persevere with the same determination in implementing his reform programme, which we wholeheartedly support.

As we prepare to enter the new millennium, it is important to be aware of the increasing interdependence of nations, large and small, and of the consequences of globalization, so that through fruitful dialogue at the global level, we may together find appropriate responses to the numerous challenges facing us, particularly the fight against international terrorism. Poverty, underdevelopment and the major pandemics must not remain the sole responsibility of the countries affected by these scourges, because for tomorrow's world to be stable it must be united founded on the principles of social justice and the equality of peoples and nations. Hence, the primacy of law must continue to guide us in

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seeking lasting solutions to the numerous regrettable conflicts throughout the world. We are pleased to note that all the peoples of the world share a determination to live in peace, within their national borders, with their neighbours and the rest of the international community.

My country welcomes the positive developments in the Lockerbie affair, which has been a matter of concern to us for many years. It has been the subject of decisions by regional organizations, such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the League of Arab States, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement. We hope that the parties involved will spare no effort to ensure that justice is done in conditions of fairness and impartiality, with all the necessary guarantees, taking into account the recognized rights of each party. We feel that the clarifications called for by the Libyan authorities are legitimate, because they are based on the objective criteria of neutrality and fair play which govern any judicial procedure worthy of the name.

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau was admitted as a fully fledged member of the United Nations in September 1974, following a lengthy and difficult struggle for national liberation. For almost a quarter of a century we have been committed to respecting and defending the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, because they are essential guidelines for active participation in international life and for the building of our young nation.

Early on we understood that in order to give shape to our political independence we needed to establish the conditions for harmonious economic development from which all sections of our population could benefit. With the assistance of the international community, therefore, our young State focused on ways and means to build a land of freedom and peace.

It goes without saying that 11 years of struggle for national liberation scarred our people and left an indelible mark on their minds and bodies. Since Guinea-Bissau is a poor country with very limited resources, everything needed to be built, despite the fact that we did not have the financial means or the necessary skills. Therefore, inspired by the courage that enabled us to galvanize ourselves to free our country, we set to the task determined to create the right conditions for the full development of our citizens and the improvement of their living standards.

Over the past four years we have succeeded in laying the foundations of a democratic State based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. As members of the Assembly know, building a nation is a long-term task requiring both determination and perseverance. Guinea-Bissau, which is among the poorest countries of the world, is no exception to that rule. Over the past two decades we have focused on consolidating our national unity by strengthening the ties of solidarity that unite our citizens, whose maturity had enabled them to wage, and succeed in, one of the most exemplary national liberation struggles in Africa. It is precisely this awareness of belonging to the same people that has enabled all sectors of our population to unite and work hand in hand for the development of the country and the well-being of all. Therefore, since its independence in 1973, despite the economic difficulties all States face, Guinea-Bissau has lived in peace and has known a period of great political stability.

However, since 7 June our country has experienced tragedy, previously unimaginable, just when it was beginning to make notable progress with regard to democracy and respect for human rights and in the economy.

An unprecedented crisis for which we were not even minimally prepared has deeply shaken and paralysed our country for some four months now, endangering the foundations of the state of law and the existence of democratic institutions in the Republic. The act of aggression by a party of our country's national army is a serious violation of the constitutional provisions in force in Guinea-Bissau. The international community, in particular the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations, have unreservedly condemned this act of aggression.

From this podium, we wish to thank the United Nations family for the solidarity and support it has provided to the President of the Republic, Mr. João Bernardo Vieira; the legal Government of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau; its leaders; and especially, the innocent, victimized population. I should like in particular to convey our gratitude to the neighbouring countries of Guinea-Bissau for their active solidarity with our people. On behalf of my Government, I specifically thank the authorities of Senegal, Guinea, Cape Verde, the Gambia and Portugal for having rapidly created an appropriate rapid-response team to evacuate citizens and foreign nationals who wished to leave, especially our own desperate compatriots, a great number of whom have sought refuge and safe haven in neighbouring countries. Each of these brother countries has distinguished itself admirably in an exemplary display of compassion and

humanity. I wish to thank them most sincerely on behalf of our Government and all of my compatriots.

I also wish to pay tribute to the courage of my own fellow citizens and to reiterate, on behalf of our Government, our keen awareness of the difficulties they face and of the need to ease their suffering by finding a speedy solution to the current crisis, so that peace and stability may be restored to our homeland, and by establishing conditions to allow our people to return to their country.

It is its desire to find a peaceful and negotiated solution to this crisis that has inspired the Government of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau in its contacts with the members of the self-proclaimed military junta. Indeed, through the joint mediation of members of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries and the Economic Community of West African States, we have signed a ceasefire and begun a constructive dialogue, which we will pursue on the basis of recognition and respect for the constitutional legality of our country and the need to work together to restore peace and stability.

We are grateful to all people of goodwill who have come forward, both in Africa and overseas, to assist us in overcoming all of these difficulties and in finding a final solution to the conflict in Guinea-Bissau.

The people of Guinea-Bissau are peaceful. They have age-old relations of friendship and brotherhood with their neighbours in the Republics of Guinea, Senegal and the Gambia. These relations are based on the common destiny which history and geography have bequeathed us. It is a precious legacy that present and future generations must preserve and defend in the conviction that their identity and their social and cultural values will endure. It is this same committed and unfailing solidarity which enabled us to free ourselves from the yoke of colonialism, as did our brothers in Guinea and Senegal.

As we have already had the opportunity to point out, the presence of Guinean and Senegalese troops in Guinea-Bissau is based on the implementation of bilateral agreements duly signed and ratified. In addition to the existence of an unquestionably legal framework, however, it is important to know and recall that, through their intervention, the Guinean and Senegalese troops bravely assisted their comrades in arms in Guinea to overcome an attempted coup that has been condemned by the OAU, the United Nations and the entire international community. They have made a courageous contribution to the maintenance of constitutional legality and democracy in Guinea-Bissau. Allow me here to pay tribute to them for their decisive action and to offer them our full gratitude.

For some four months, Guinea-Bissau has been experiencing a major tragedy that has brought great loss of human life, serious material damage and much suffering to our people, who have been internally displaced and made refugees in neighbouring countries, Cape Verde and Portugal.

Once again, I wish to thank the Assembly for its solidarity with our country and people. Its assistance is valued and will be valuable in healing the wounds and assisting all the citizens of our country to understand each other better and work together for the common future of their homeland. I can assure members that we will spare no effort to ensure that, through dialogue and joint endeavours, peace will return to a Guinea-Bissau united and reconciled in solidarity.

More than ever, we recognize the need to establish a pluralistic democracy in a state of law and an egalitarian society that will guarantee full respect for civil, political and human rights. Today more than ever, we are aware of the importance of peace in our country and in other conflicted regions of the world where peoples of the same country have been torn apart. I am thinking in particular of the fratricidal wars which for some years now have ravaged other African countries, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular.

At a time when we are preparing to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is appropriate to proclaim our complete commitment to the fundamental principles of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights, which underpin our search for harmonious development and a better standard of living. The international community, the United Nations in particular, has always heeded the aspirations of the people of Guinea-Bissau. With its solidarity, it has made our struggle for national liberation its own battle for the emancipation of peoples throughout the world. Today, as in the past, we need its support to rebuild our country and restore confidence and hope to our compatriots, who impatiently await the moment when they can return to their country, their homes, their families, their friends and their workplaces — to peace and stability.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Rwanda, His Excellency Mr. Anastase Gasana.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the people of Rwanda and on my own behalf, allow me to convey sincere and heartfelt congratulations to you on your outstanding election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. This election reflects the unanimous recognition by States of our Organization of your country, Uruguay. A well-deserved tribute is likewise extended to your distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, who demonstrated dedication, skill and open-mindedness at the last session.

Heartfelt fraternal thanks go to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his skill, performance and far-sightedness. This fifty-third session of the General Assembly is the second in his term of office. The Government and the people of Rwanda are grateful to the Secretary-General for the working visit he made to Rwanda in May 1998. That historic visit made it possible for him to take stock of the results of the genocide committed in Rwanda in 1994, and we thank him for his words of encouragement to the Government and the people of Rwanda for efforts made in the process of rebuilding the country.

Each time we have had an opportunity to do so, the Government of Rwanda has supported the proposals of the Secretary-General with regard to the essential reforms of our Organization and deemed that the same proposals for reform were likewise valid for the reform of the Security Council. We are prepared to continue our contribution to and support for the collective efforts to bring about more democratization in the Security Council at the dawn of the third millennium.

The existence of the specialized agencies within the United Nations has made this institution an instrument of development, particularly in the economic, social, political and cultural fields, and in many other areas. The Government of Rwanda supports the existence of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. The United Nations reform under way should take them into account in order to better structure them to be more operational.

Since the 1960s, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has constantly been a source of concern to the United Nations and the international community. One United Nations Secretary-General even lost his life there in the search for a solution to the problems of that country. Today, more than in the past, this country, Congo — which has since become the Democratic Republic of the Congo — is experiencing the darkest times in its history, because genocide is being committed there on the orders of the highest authorities of that country.

Since 2 August 1998, Rwanda, like everyone, has been witnessing a rebellion in the Democratic Republic of the Congo against the Government and President Kabila. Since then, the Government of Rwanda has consistently pointed out that that crisis is purely internal and that Mr. Kabila had definitely been facing a highly structured rebellion. The commission of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), composed of the four member countries Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Namibia and Zambia, acknowledged in its report to SADC, following its fact-finding mission, that a rebellion exists against Mr. Kabila in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. President Kabila himself implicitly recognized the existence of this rebellion when he published a long list of Congolese authorities that he banished by withdrawing their Congolese passports and issuing international arrest warrants against them. These Congolese were banished by President Kabila because they are leading the Congolese rebellion against him. Mr. Kabila's implicit recognition of this rebellion was also shown when he arrested and imprisoned six journalists from the Kinshasa news agency "La Voix du Peuple" because he suspected them of supporting the Congolese rebellion.

The position of Rwanda is to join its mediation efforts with those of the international community to find a solution to the Congolese crisis through negotiations between the Congolese rebels and the Government of President Kabila. Unfortunately, these efforts of the Government of Rwanda have collided with the obstinacy of President Kabila, who believes that the solution to this inter-Congolese conflict is to persecute and massacre the Banyamulenge, the Tutsi and the Rwandese living in Congo, as well as Congolese who refuse to support his grim designs.

In this respect, Rwanda, like other observers near and far, is concerned at the increase in human rights violations committed by the Government of President Kabila, which is inciting the people to genocide, massacres and racial and ethnic hatred. The Government of Rwanda believes that the United Nations must condemn the genocide as well as human rights violations being committed in the Democratic Republic of the

Congo and take the necessary steps against the Government of President Kabila.

This genocide and these human rights violations are characterized by summary executions, incitement to hatred by President Kabila and members of his Government, massive arrests, arbitrary detentions and forced disappearances. With regard to summary executions and incitement to hatred taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the following facts are illustrative. The present genocide and the massacres in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are similar to those that occurred in Rwanda in 1994 when the Radio Télévision Libre de Mille Collines (RTLM) was inciting people to hunt down Tutsis and their Hutu accomplices, as they were called by the radio station at the time.

During the Victoria Falls Summit, which took place on 7 and 8 August 1998, President Kabila declared that those who committed genocide in Rwanda were right and were worthy of support then and now. This is tangible evidence of recruitment by President Kabila of Interahamwe militias and former members of the armed forces of Rwanda who committed genocide in Rwanda and took refuge in Congo Brazzaville, a fact recently denounced by the High Commissioner for Refugees.

At that same Victoria Falls Summit, President Kabila implied that Rwanda was seeking to establish a Hima empire in the Great Lakes region. In that regard, my Government believes that that statement by President Kabila shows his racist leanings and theories, similar to those spread during the 1980s by the late President Habyarimana and his ilk, who invented this pseudo-empire to stifle the claims of Rwandese refugees who had been in exile for more than 30 years and who were beginning to vociferously reclaim their inalienable rights to unconditional return to their motherland.

These, then, are the racist theories cunningly invented and orchestrated by the former President of Rwanda, Mr. Habyarimana, and his regime in order to demonize the Tutsi. Now, unfortunately, Mr. Kabila is making use of them once more to demonize not only the Tutsi but the whole of Rwanda and all its people. In that context, the Government of Rwanda requests the international community to put an end to these groundless racist theories and this campaign to demonize Rwanda and its people.

President Kabila and his close collaborators are inciting the Congolese people to acts of mindless violence against any person suspected of being a rebel, any person of Tutsi origin and any person who, according to them, is in league, directly or indirectly, with the rebellion.

The governmental authorities of Kinshasa are calling upon the people, through the official media, "to treat the enemy like a virus, a mosquito, a piece of garbage that must be crushed with determination and without mercy".

The Congolese Minister of Justice, who after all is supposed to be safeguarding everyone's human rights, has said, "These Rwandans, these Tutsis, they are insects, microbes that must be methodically eradicated."

In support of the words of President Kabila, who said he would export war to Rwanda, the Congolese Minister of Health, Dr. Jean-Baptiste Nsonji, stated, "The Rwandans will become like snakes whose head and tail have been cut off, unable to move, unable to escape."

In response to these incitements to hatred and violence spread by President Kabila and the Congolese Minister of Information, Mr. Didier Mumengi, the Minister of Health, Dr. Jean-Baptiste Nsonji, and the Director of President Kabila's cabinet, Mr. Yerodia Abdoulaye, the population has begun to attack persons suspected of being in league with the rebels. People have been burnt alive because they were caught with red mud on their shoes — red being the colour of the mud in the region of the lower part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at that time occupied by rebels.

The Government's soldiers have fired point blank at other suspects whose bodies were abandoned in the streets. Several mentally ill people were summarily executed because of a rumour, spread by Kabila's Government, that the rebels had disguised themselves as madmen in order to pass unnoticed. On 27 August 1998, a mentally ill person living at the corner of Kasai and Usoke streets in the town of Barumbu was riddled with bullets in the central market of Kinshasa. An unidentified person was summarily shot down because he was caught speaking on a cellular phone. Another person was executed purely and simply because he was speaking English.

President Kabila's governmental troops are using all possible means to wipe out the evidence of the atrocities they commit. Several witnesses, including some fishermen, agree that they saw human bodies carried on the waters of the Congo river. Other persons suspected of being rebels have been buried alive in Kitambo and Masina.

The mass arrests, arbitrary detentions and forced disappearances in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been denounced in particular by an African human rights association (ASADHO) that works in Kinshasa. The association denounced these arrests and disappearances on 10 August and 3 September 1998, and the following facts were stated by this Congolese human rights association:

> "Several individuals of Tutsi origin were arrested and arbitrarily detained in the Kokola and Tshatshi camps and in various jails belonging to the information service and in the Kin-Mazière jail in Kinshasa-Gombe; more than 500 soldiers from the former Zairian armed forces were arrested, and some are still missing to this day.
>
> "Other Congolese who are married to Tutsis, friends of Tutsis or who look like Tutsis have been arrested in connection with this inter-Congolese conflict. Some persons have been removed from their homes, their hotel rooms and even from the premises of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kinshasa, as a result of curfews and various manhunt operations decreed by the Kabila Government."

All these facts are cited from that Congolese human rights association.

The Rwandan Government believes, once again, that the solution to this inter-Congolese conflict lies in political negotiations between the Kabila Government and the rebels, for the following reasons.

First, the Congolese must resolve among themselves, once and for all, the question of nationality and citizenship, though this is not negotiable. Normally, a question of nationality or citizenship is not up for negotiation, but we believe that this problem has to be resolved among the Congolese. Indeed, we wonder why President Kabila's former ministers, such as the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Karaha, and the Minister of State to the Presidency of the Republic, Mr. Bugera, and many other Congolese citizens from the eastern part of the country have been banished from their homes and from Congolese territory. It is Rwanda's view that we cannot eternally have stateless people on our borders, especially the eastern border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Secondly, this inter-Congolese conflict has repercussions for the security of the neighbouring countries, particularly Rwanda, given that Kabila's forces are a combination of all the criminal elements of the countries of the region. Security in the north of Rwanda is constantly menaced by elements of the former Rwandan Armed Forces and the Interahamwe soldiers who committed the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and who still use Congolese territory as a rear base in order to reprise their gruesome crimes. The security of neighbouring countries must be a constant source of concern to the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be constantly mindful of the fact that each time the forces of evil seek to sow insecurity in a neighbouring country, the country of origin of these destabilizing forces forfeits its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Thirdly, the Congolese army should be national, not a Katangese militia composed of followers of President Kabila; the Congolese of the eastern part of the country, the Banyamulengue, the Congolese of Masisi, those of Jomba and those of Rutshuru and other eastern locales, as well as other regions of the country, should also be part of it.

Fourthly, the inter-Congolese conflict will be resolved by good governance and good leadership that does not incite people to commit genocide and massacre of part of the population that it is supposed to protect. The political negotiations between the Kabila Government and the rebels must encourage the emergence of this kind of leadership, which the Democratic Republic of the Congo so urgently needs.

Fifthly, the philosophy of genocide and the culture of murder that President Kabila is cultivating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the assistance of former elements of the Rwandan Armed Forces and the Interahamwe soldiers that committed the genocide in Rwanda, as well as terrorists in the pay of either country, must be quickly eradicated from the Congolese population by a new, enlightened leadership devoted to the national cause, the cause of all Congolese without exception.

We have spoken at some length on the problems of the Great Lakes region, and particularly those of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; this is necessary in view of my Government's great esteem, respect and consideration for the fraternal people of the Congo. That is why my Government shouldered its responsibility and did its neighbourly duty to the Congolese people, *inter alia* by demonstrating solidarity with the fraternal people of Congo in helping it rid itself of the 32-year

dictatorship of the former President Mobutu, who had bankrupted the country.

In its efforts to find a solution to the present crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Government of Rwanda supports political negotiations leading to the emergence of a leadership worthy to guide the Democratic Republic of the Congo to a future other than that of genocide — which, unfortunately, is the situation under the regime of President Kabila.

But although President Kabila and his cronies have brought disappointment and despair to the Congolese people by sowing ethnic hatred in their country, Rwanda — which had the misfortune to be the victim of the 1994 genocide — has the right to denounce the crime against humanity that is now being perpetrated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in order to prevent it from being exported to Rwanda, as appears to be on President Kabila's political and military agenda.

We hope that the United Nations will speedily condemn the genocide being perpetrated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and will take the necessary steps to halt it before it is too late. Copies of the Dallaire fax on the genocide in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are without question to be found here in New York, at the United Nations Office at Geneva, at the European Union headquarters in Brussels and in every Western capital. In the light of the existence of the Dallaire fax, no one can claim not to have been informed in time to condemn President Kabila's acts of genocide and those of the Interahamwe militia and the elements of the former Rwandan Armed Forces, who planned and carried out the genocide in Rwanda more than four years ago.

At the very beginning of the crisis, the Congolese Minister of the Interior, Mr. Gaëtan Kakudji, quietly approached the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the High Commissioner for Human Rights and told them that unless they quickly organized the evacuation of all those who had been arrested, those people would be killed. We wonder what the United Nations did in response to that alarm sounded by a Congolese official, none other than the Minister of the Interior, who has now dissociated himself from President Kabila's acts of genocide by abandoning his ministerial post and fleeing his country for Europe, according to information in the media. The defection of the Congolese Minister of the Interior, who is a cousin of President Kabila, may be food for thought, and perhaps for inspiration, for President Kabila's new allies. Will they continue to support a genocidal regime that has come to be abhorred by its own people?

The Governor of Shaba-Katanga province also made a discreet appeal to the United Nations and, thus, to the international community; he revealed that he had official orders to massacre all Congolese Tutsis, anyone of Rwandese origin, and any Congolese who resisted this grim plan. How did the United Nations respond to that appeal from the Governor of Shaba-Katanga province?

Many people are wondering whether or not Rwanda has a presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They have, indeed, made this an overriding issue. The problem of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of attempts to resolve it is not to find out who is and who is not in the Congo; it is to try to understand why. Why is a given actor present in the Congo? What are the real reasons for such a presence there, and why is another actor not present or even trying to be there? Why is genocide being committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the orders of the highest authorities, including President Kabila himself? What is the meaning of the presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the combined genocidal forces that came from Rwanda in 1994 — the Interahamwe militia, elements of the former Rwandan Armed Forces, elements of the ex-forces of the former Ugandan dictator Idi Amin Dada, terrorists in the pay of one country or another, and other trouble-makers? Around whom and against whom are these fascist forces uniting in the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

Will the United Nations and the entire international community wait for genocide to be committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo before they dispatch a commission of enquiry after the event? Could not the International Criminal Court — whose recent establishment through the adoption of a suitable statute we welcome — quickly take up this matter and arrest the leader and his henchmen who are now engaged in murder in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

Those are the real questions that in our humble view should be asked about the present crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — a crisis to which a purely political solution has to be found through political negotiations between the Government of President Kabila and the Congolese rebels.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Fritz Longchamp, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Haiti.

Mr. Longchamp (Haiti) (*interpretation from French*): It is a true pleasure for me to address the General Assembly once more. I wish first of all to echo previous speakers in congratulating you most warmly, Sir, on behalf of my delegation, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. I take this opportunity also to express our gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko for the excellent work carried out under his presidency.

To the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, we reaffirm our confidence in his outstanding endeavours to preserve peace and to promote development.

To all participants in the fifty-third session, I wish the greatest success in the interests of all our peoples.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Ten days ago hurricane Georges passed through the Caribbean region, striking several of our countries with its fury and leaving considerable damage in its wake. I wish to express deepest sympathy, on behalf of Haiti, to our brotherly Governments and peoples who, like us, were so hard hit by this unavoidable disaster.

The provisional toll in Haiti is quite heavy: 150 dead and dozens missing — more than 500,000 victims all told. There was considerable material damage to agriculture and to infrastructure: roads and bridges were destroyed and crops devastated in several regions. The total cost of these losses is estimated at approximately $200 million.

International solidarity was quickly displayed in the wake of this disaster. I would therefore like to thank all the friendly Governments, international institutions and non-governmental organizations for the support they have given us thus far.

While the present situation is serious, our concern for the future is even greater. With over 60 per cent of our agricultural production destroyed, the outlook is extremely bleak. We fear that once emergency aid is no longer being provided in the coming months there will be a severe shortage of foodstuffs and basic goods. We therefore appeal to the international community to extend considerable assistance to our efforts to restore and rebuild the affected zones and to support our measures to solve the public health problems that will arise. In this regard, we invite delegations to support draft resolution A/53/L.2/Rev.1, which will soon be introduced to the General Assembly, as a first step in this direction.

Profound changes have taken place in international relations in the course of the last 10 years. The lessening of ideological confrontation and the strengthening of interdependence among nations have provided new opportunities for closer cooperation among States. The phenomenon of globalization, which is characterized by unprecedented ties between human activities throughout the world, has expanded further and has been propelled by spectacular growth in communications.

Some had anticipated a more peaceful and united world in the next century. Yet, less than 500 days away from the year 2000, the international picture is frankly disconcerting. New hotbeds of tension have arisen in many regions of the world, while no substantial progress has been made to resolve various age-old conflicts. That is the case in the Middle East, where we hope that the recent discussions held this week in Washington will serve to permanently revive the peace process that has been stalled for more than a year.

We deplore the armed conflicts that have brought untold suffering on populations, be it in Kosovo, Angola, Afghanistan, the Great Lakes region or elsewhere. The Republic of Haiti invites the parties concerned to seek a solution to their problems through dialogue. The international community must also continue to carry out efforts to restore peace to these regions.

International terrorism, of which we had hoped to have seen the last, has re-emerged in a troubling fashion with the terrible events that have taken place in Africa and Northern Ireland. In condemning these acts, Haiti calls on the international community to adopt effective measures to combat this threat to international security.

Elsewhere, the world is facing a real challenge whose consequences are incalculable on more than one front. I am referring to drug-trafficking and its related crimes — arms-trafficking, organized crime and money-laundering.

The problem of drug-trafficking continues to threaten the integrity of our territories, to weaken the foundations of our societies and to undermine the health of our peoples. Combating this scourge requires further

cooperation at the bilateral, regional and international levels, as was highlighted at the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the drugs problem. Haiti, which has unfortunately been used as a transit country for some of the drugs headed for markets in consumer countries, has adopted a vigorous policy that has already begun to bear fruit. This involves the drafting of legislative measures against drug-trafficking and money-laundering; the establishment of a body entrusted with combating trafficking in narcotic drugs; the development of cooperation with neighbouring countries; and accession to international instruments in this area.

In speaking of the dangers threatening the future of mankind, I must refer here to the existence of considerable stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. The Republic of Haiti welcomes the recent progress achieved in the reduction of these weapons. It will continue to support wholeheartedly the efforts of the international community for their complete elimination.

In this connection, Haiti deplored the nuclear tests recently carried out by India and Pakistan, which have contributed to increasing tensions in that part of the world. It invites those countries to become parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The global economic situation at the end of this century has also given rise to many concerns. The phenomenon of globalization, which is characterized by a liberalization of market forces, which, according to numerous observers, should accelerate growth and promote development, has above all been marked by greater inequality and sluggish growth. The income gap between North and South has continued to widen. In 1965 the average per capita income in the G-7 countries was 20 times that of the world's seven poorest countries; by 1995 that figure had almost doubled.

Today poverty continues to grow throughout the world. Entire populations are victims of the serious problems of malnutrition and abject poverty. Health care and education are inaccessible to millions of people. There has been further destruction of the environment throughout the world, threatening the very survival of mankind. Even more than the countries of the third world, which have been battered by these global developments, the least developed countries — including my country, Haiti — find themselves ever more marginalized and must face a worsening of the standard of living of their peoples. The feeling of despair is increasingly spreading among younger generations facing a seemingly gloomy future. All of this poses serious threats to the very stability of our countries. This situation cries out for the international community to redouble its efforts to combat poverty. United and concerted long-term action that mobilizes considerable resources is essential if we wish to achieve satisfactory results.

The magnitude of current problems poses a major challenge to the international community. The United Nations, whose primary mission is to ensure world security and to promote economic and social progress for people, is the ideal forum to discuss these questions and to search for solutions that take everyone's interests into account. It must be able to play the role that has been entrusted to it in order to create a global situation of peace, which will facilitate development through cooperation for all peoples. It must respond to this challenge by using its resources effectively and by adapting itself to changes in international relations.

In this regard, the delegation of Haiti welcomes the reform process initiated by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to breathe new life into the Organization and to better enable it to face the increasingly complex problems of today's world. The initial measures approved by the General Assembly have enabled United Nations bodies to work more coherently and consistently. We hope that further measures to be considered at this session will strengthen the capacities of the United Nations to carry out its activities.

Reform in the Security Council, which has been discussed for five years now, is of capital importance given the role played by that organ in the maintenance of international peace and security. Haiti continues to call for greater openness in the functioning of the Council and for greater participation in the decision-making process, so that its decisions reflect the general opinion of the international community as a whole and not only the position of the members of the Council.

In this context, the envisaged increase in its membership must take into account more systematically the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Every effort must be made to ensure that the universality of all the planet's inhabitants is reflected in the United Nations system.

In this respect, we welcome the dialogue between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. A positive

outcome to this dialogue will allow for progress in this area.

This year we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. By enshrining the principle of the respect of fundamental human rights and by ensuring their promotion, the United Nations has made a considerable contribution to the development of an international system to protect the fundamental freedoms and ensure the emancipation of peoples throughout the world.

Along these lines, my delegation welcomes the fact that the international community has finally acknowledged that the right to development is an intrinsic part of fundamental human rights. But that acknowledgment is not sufficient. We must work to ensure full respect for that right by establishing programmes and by mobilizing sufficient resources.

Today human rights are a reality that no Government can ignore. In Haiti respect for human rights is guaranteed in the Constitution, and the Government is committed to ensuring the full enjoyment of those rights by all. In this context, reform in the judicial machinery that will allow for the consolidation of the state of law is now being implemented. Regrettably, however, the very complex situation resulting from a twofold electoral and governmental problem has made it difficult for institutions to function normally and to cooperate with the international community. To overcome this handicap, the President of the Republic, Mr. René Préval, is resolutely undertaking every possible effort.

Democratic institutions necessarily have a role to play, but given the regrettably slow process of democracy-building, the hoped-for results have not yet been achieved despite the numerous initiatives undertaken. It is encouraging to note, however, that these expectations and initiatives have been undertaken within the framework of the provisions of the Constitution, which guarantees that a viable solution will be found.

Similarly, the head of State has consulted all levels of Haitian society in order to set up a new electoral council that will be responsible for organizing, in accordance with the Constitution and as soon as possible, free, fair and democratic elections at the municipal and legislative levels. He will do everything in his power to guarantee the participation of all sectors in these elections, which, duly carried out, will help us overcome the governmental crisis that has arisen.

Despite the unfavourable circumstances that have darkened the horizon at the dawning of the third millennium, we must not lose hope in a better world. In order to do that, we must further develop cooperation, strengthen our partnerships and work together to improve our peoples' standard of living in a world where so many natural disasters and environmental phenomena remind us of our duty to solidarity. The United Nations is the ideal framework for joining our efforts to achieve this common goal.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is His Excellency the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, Mr. João Bernardo Miranda.

Mr. Miranda (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*): Allow me to begin by congratulating Mr. Didier Opertti, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Angola, on his election to the presidency of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We are convinced that his experience, wisdom and diplomatic skills will help us to achieve the goals we set for this new session.

Angola is especially pleased by the election of a representative from Uruguay, a country that has greatly contributed to the preservation of peace and security in the world, as was recently demonstrated by its participation in the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Angola.

I should like to pay tribute to the outgoing President for the manner in which he conducted the work of this important body during his mandate. And a word of appreciation goes also to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dynamism and for the wisdom he has demonstrated at the helm of our Organization.

Almost 10 years have passed since the end of the East-West confrontation. We had hoped that by this time there would have been a greater positive impact on the international scene, especially regarding peace and security, and economic development.

Unfortunately, in spite of the progress we have made — particularly in the promotion of democratic values and in the greater respect for human rights, among others — we are still witnessing the proliferation of internal armed conflicts, violent border disputes among nations, military aggression against independent and sovereign States, continued degradation of the

environment, and economic decline with the consequent social and economic deterioration, especially in developing countries. We are also witnessing an increase in transnational organized crime and terrorism, which poses a serious threat to the stability of all nations.

This scenario casts a shadow over the prospects for the rapid implementation of the new political world order that emerged as a result of the end of the cold war, which would bring peace, stability, development and democracy. We still have a long way to go.

It is incumbent on the United Nations, given its universal character and singular role in international relations, to shoulder the main responsibility in the search for solutions to all the problems that have become obstacles to achieving peaceful development and the well-being of our peoples, and in devising fair and effective formulas that meet the collective interests of its Members.

The question of conflict resolution and prevention should be given high priority, for this will ensure the alleviation of tension in the world. The urgent creation of early-warning mechanisms will certainly enable the international community to act in a timely manner to prevent the triggering of potential conflicts, thus avoiding the repetition of past mistakes, such as those we have seen recently in Africa.

In this connection, Angola shares the views of the Secretary-General as expressed in the recommendations in his report (A/52/871) on the prevention of conflict and the promotion of sustainable development in Africa, and hopes that the members of the Security Council will turn them into practical action.

United Nations international arms control efforts should not be restricted to weapons of mass destruction. We must urgently focus on the issue of small arms and other war matériel sold to terrorist groups by some producer countries. These supplies have led to an increase in armed actions by subversive groups and are an incentive to all those who wish to take power by force. We believe that the creation of special mechanisms for the control of small-arms exports to armed groups, as well as the imposition of restrictive measures against those States that violate them, could help to stop the proliferation of weapons around the world.

The United Nations, in cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, should promote the creation of collective defence and security mechanisms as a means to prevent the threat of conflict and guarantee the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of States.

The United Nations will not be able to face many of its challenges unless it can count on the commitment and engagement of its Member States. This is especially true with respect to the resolution of its financial crisis and the reform of its structures to conform to the new international reality. We feel encouraged by the reforms undertaken by the Secretary-General aimed at turning the Organization into a more dynamic and effective body. The reform process must be thorough and include the United Nations main bodies, especially the Security Council. The Council's current structure is outdated. Angola supports eliminating the current geographical imbalance in the composition of the Security Council by increasing the number of both permanent and non-permanent members to ensure that the main regions of the world are fairly represented.

The claim of the African continent to at least two permanent seats should be adequately addressed, not only because the region is not currently represented at all, but also because it is the largest regional group in the United Nations. Angola also supports the Brazilian claim to a permanent seat given the exceptional role the country has played in United Nations activities in all areas, and especially because it belongs to a region that has no permanent members in the Security Council.

The Republic of Angola is facing a difficult and critical phase in its history. We cannot yet announce the end of the war and the beginning of a new era of consolidation of democracy in Angola. The peace process and all related efforts made by both the Angolan Government and the international community are blocked due to UNITA's deliberate, systematic non-compliance with the provisions of the Lusaka Protocol, the pertinent Security Council resolutions and Angolan law. Mr. Jonas Savimbi has demonstrated his unwillingness to transform UNITA into a civilian political party.

As Members are aware, the Lusaka Protocol, signed by the Government and UNITA in 1994, should have led to the end of the internal conflict, which was resumed by UNITA after its defeat in the 1992 general elections. But, four years since the agreement came into force the peace process has yet to be concluded, and, what is even more dangerous, it has suffered serious setbacks due to the successive obstacles raised by UNITA's militarist wing, led by Mr. Savimbi. UNITA deliberately deceived the United Nations and the international community when it

declared that it was totally demilitarized. As the Security Council itself could determine, UNITA continues to maintain active military units with sophisticated weaponry.

UNITA has also hindered the process of normalization of State administration by refusing to abandon the areas it illegally occupies. At the same time, it has initiated a new escalation of hostilities throughout the country, unleashing armed attacks against local government authorities, the national police and the national armed forces, while also engaging in massacres of the civilian population. Hundreds of people have been killed, mostly civilians; about a million have been displaced; and UNITA has reoccupied areas where State administration had already been normalized. The United Nations Blue Helmet units and humanitarian convoys have also been targets of UNITA's military actions, which constitute crimes against humanity, given their nature and characteristics as well as the coldness and cruelty with which they are committed. They are terrorist crimes as defined by international human rights and humanitarian law instruments. The international community cannot passively watch these systematic abuses, which flout international legal and moral values.

During the recent summit in Durban, South Africa, the heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement condemned Jonas Savimbi for these systematic human rights abuses. Similarly, the heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) — well aware of the seriousness of the Angolan situation, which has had terrible repercussions for the whole region — held Mr. Savimbi solely responsible for the current stalemate in the application of the Lusaka Protocol. Due to Mr. Savimbi's staunch pursuit of war as the only means to attain political power, he is continuing to reinforce his military wing's capabilities. This behaviour was declared by SADC to be that of a war criminal. As has been done in some other regions of the world, Mr. Savimbi and perhaps his closest collaborators — who together are responsible for all the war crimes committed in Angola — should be made to respond in court for the heinous crimes they have committed over many years.

Throughout the peace process, Jonas Savimbi's stance has revealed a personal strategy aimed at creating generalized chaos in the country in order to take power by force. The facts are clear: it does not make sense for UNITA to resort to armed struggle against a State where political activity is not restricted and where UNITA participates in its main political institutions — namely, the Government and Parliament. Furthermore, Angola's armed forces include hundreds of UNITA members, including generals.

It is unacceptable to have a political organization such as UNITA, which is not even subject to international law, challenging each and everyone, including the Security Council by blatantly and systematically violating its resolutions. UNITA itself is being penalized because of one man, Mr. Savimbi, who abuses the good faith of his countrymen who believed in UNITA as a credible political alternative in the emerging political system of the fledgling Angolan democracy.

For all those reasons, the Security Council in resolution 1127 (1997) tried to separate the wheat from the chaff. In the course of imposing new sanctions against UNITA, the Council issued a list of UNITA members universally considered dangerous elements. This list is headed by Mr. Savimbi, who is thereby forbidden to freely circulate in the world. Only a criminal would receive such a sanction from the international community.

Along those lines, the Angolan Government has suspended UNITA members from participation in the Government. The Government demanded a clarification of their position vis-à-vis the peace process in Angola: either they are in favour of peace and democracy, or, like their leader, they choose war as a means to take political power. All those who chose peace have since resumed the activities for which they had been appointed within the framework of the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation. Recently, political leaders and party cadres, together with officers from UNITA, made it clear that they did not support war as does Mr. Jonas Savimbi.

On 2 August, they issued a political manifesto denouncing Mr. Savimbi's behaviour and, in an effort to revitalize UNITA, they created a Renovation Committee which removed Mr. Savimbi from the leadership of the party. The goals defended by the UNITA Renovation Committee in its political manifesto are those of peace and the consolidation of democracy. This renovation movement supports the peace accords, national reconciliation and the effective transformation of UNITA into a civilian political party, and it has given a new breath of hope for the conclusion of the peace process.

For that reason, the Angolan Government has decided to recognize UNITA's Renovation Committee as its only interlocutor and partner in the implementation of outstanding tasks in the Lusaka Protocol. The SADC

countries have already recognized the Renovation Committee, and we are convinced that the international community at large will not hesitate to support and promote the efforts of the new UNITA leadership as it assumes its role in the young, multi-party democracy in Angola.

The Government of Angola does not believe it is either prudent or realistic, but rather, dangerous, to yet again give Mr. Savimbi the benefit of the doubt. This would only lead to more false expectations, and we would be wasting much valuable time to take appropriate measures in this respect.

In the light of the new situation in UNITA, the Angolan Government feels optimistic and therefore is still committed to the successful conclusion of the Lusaka Protocol. It will, however, continue to take all necessary measures against those who pursue attempts to disrupt the political order, so as to guarantee the territorial integrity of the country and the protection of its citizens.

From this rostrum we want to draw the attention of countries, such as the Togolese Republic and Burkina Faso to the fact that the Government of Angola will not continue to tolerate the support they are providing to UNITA's militarist wing led by Mr. Savimbi. This includes facilities for military training for these groups to commit terrorist acts in Angola. This is a clear violation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Charter, the United Nations charter and Security Council resolutions 864 (1993), 1127 (1997) and 1173 (1998).

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my Government's heartfelt tribute to the efforts and role of the United Nations in the peace process in Angola, and especially the contribution of the late Maître Blondin Beye, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, in support of peace in Angola.

I would also like to reiterate my Government's appeal to the international community to continue to render humanitarian assistance to the displaced people in Angola and to assist in the rehabilitation of social and economic infrastructures.

Angola is also concerned about events in other areas around the world. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the military invasion by foreign forces is a serious threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that country. This could also destabilize the central and southern regions of the continent. This led some countries, including Angola, to consent to the request for military aid by the Congolese authorities within the framework of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security.

The recent summit in Victoria Falls of the leaders of the countries involved in the problem is a step in the right direction for the resolution of the crisis. Angola supports the withdrawal of the invading troops and the drafting of an agreement that ensures respect by all countries in the region of the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This would enable that country's authorities to begin the task of establishing a broad internal dialogue that should lead to general elections in 1999, in accordance with the democratization programme established by President Kabila.

Angola welcomes the reinstatement of the legitimately elected authorities in Sierra Leone and the initiation of the process of the return of the refugees. Angola hopes this is the beginning of the normalization of the situation in that country.

In Guinea-Bissau, the signing of a ceasefire agreement between the Government and the junta opens broad opportunities for a negotiated end to the conflict. We salute and encourage the efforts being developed by the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP), where Angola, along with the countries of the region, will continue to contribute to their efforts to foster reconciliation between brothers and sisters in Guinea-Bissau.

In Western Sahara, the obstacles placed in the path of a peaceful solution have been progressively removed. Angola continues to believe that a referendum held on the basis of fairness and justice is the best means for the people in the territory to choose their own destiny. We support the continuation of United Nations and OAU joint efforts.

We would also like to call the attention of the international community to the problem of Somalia. Although we recognize that the parties to the conflict have the primary responsibility for finding a peaceful solution, we believe this will be possible only with the support of the United Nations.

We regret the lack of significant progress in the Middle East peace process. Angola encourages the parties to comply with the commitments made under the Oslo agreement. We continue to defend the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and we advocate

a rapid and fair resolution of the issues of the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine, which should take into account the interests of all the peoples in the region. We believe that this will ease the tensions in Arab-Israeli relations.

The situation in East Timor, a territory with which Angola shares linguistic links and a common anti-colonial struggle, has recently seen positive developments as a result of the understanding reached between Indonesia and Portugal, under the auspices of the United Nations on the reduction of the Indonesian military presence in the territory, will contribute to the achievement of a peaceful solution. Angola reaffirms its support for the struggle of the people of East Timor for their right to self-determination.

The current world economic situation raises serious concerns, since it contributes directly to the deterioration of the standards of living of millions of human beings, especially those in developing countries. We are concerned by the imposition of unilateral restrictions to free trade and financial and economic cooperation, such as the embargo imposed against Cuba. Its victims are the most vulnerable groups in society: women and children. The extraterritorial nature of these measures runs counter to international law and does not contribute to forging links of friendship among peoples.

We believe that we urgently need to promote international economic cooperation based on a partnership that will allow all those that participate in the process to share equitably in its gains. In spite of the implementation of endless reforms and structural adjustment programmes, as recommended by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the economies of developing countries continue to make such modest advances that we must question the real objectives of such reforms.

We join with those who have spoken before us in reiterating our need to consider establishing a new international economic order that is more real, more fair and more equitable, capable of strengthening the international financial system and supporting national efforts to promote economic development throughout the world.

It is not enough to appeal to the understanding of the developed countries. We need to be more strongly involved in the transformation of the international economic picture. The application of measures that would have an immediate impact, accompanied by well-structured programmes, such as the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, deserve special attention if they are to attain the success we expect of them.

The Final Declaration of the twelfth summit of non-aligned countries, recently held in Durban, South Africa, also defines some steps that can be taken to solve the crisis, among which it underscores an increase in South-South cooperation.

This year, we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This occasion should be an incentive to develop effective instruments to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, since non-respect of these rights is the main cause of conflict and instability. The establishment of the International Criminal Court will be a significant step in this direction. The Angolan Government is sparing no effort to promote, protect and defend all human rights. Were it not for the bellicose behaviour of Mr. Savimbi, Angola would have hosted, late this year, the first ministerial conference of the Organization of African Unity on human and peoples' rights in Africa. That initiative was my Government's contribution to the jubilee of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In conclusion, let me emphasize the role the United Nations is playing to promote and protect human rights throughout the world.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, His Excellency Mr. Irakli Menagarishvili.

Mr. Menagarishvili (Georgia): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. This decision, to which Georgia acceded with pleasure, is a fitting recognition of Uruguay's high international authority and a well-deserved tribute to Mr. Opertti's personal qualities and profound experience.

At the same time, I am honoured to have the opportunity to express my gratitude to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, for his significant contributions to the successful outcome of the previous session.

Today, as the second millennium is coming to a close, an inevitable question pops up: What will the next, the third, millennium be like? Indeed, for the first time since the end of the global stand-off, the opportunity has emerged to create a qualitatively new world order based upon the comprehensive development of free and independent States. Allow me to share our observations on some of the important issues that we face.

We have repeatedly underscored the threat to global stability posed by the spread of the disease of aggressive separatism and the ineffectiveness of our joint efforts to cope with it. For five years now, the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, has been on the agendas of a number of international forums. The need to resolve this conflict within the framework of the territorial integrity of Georgia and to ensure the speedy return of hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons has been reiterated more than once. However, we have to admit that real progress towards the settlement of this conflict has not been accomplished.

Moreover, in May 1998, as a result of the punitive operation carried out by the Abkhaz side in the Gali region of Abkhazia, Georgia, more than 60 civilians were killed, about 1,400 houses burned and over 40,000 peaceful civilians expelled once again from their land. The vigorous efforts of the Georgian Government at that point averted full-scale confrontation and bloodshed.

The tragedy in the Gali region was preceded by the unfulfilled resolutions of the Security Council and by decisions on the "ethnic cleansing" of the Georgian population in Abkhazia, Georgia, adopted at the Budapest and Lisbon summits of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Thus, we are once again confronted by the acute problem of the implementation of decisions taken by the international community.

The Government of Georgia remains committed to a peaceful solution of the conflict and applies only political means, to which there is no reasonable alternative. In order to add new impetus to the peace process, we have welcomed the creation and development of the Geneva process, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the Russian Federation as facilitator, the Friends of the Secretary-General and the OSCE. More active work should be conducted in the framework of the Geneva process on the question of the political status of Abkhazia within the Georgian State.

In our view, it is urgent to fully resume the functioning of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and, in accordance with its mandate, to ensure the freedom of its activities.

The matter of utmost importance is the safety of UNOMIG personnel in the conflict zone. Their vulnerability was again proved by the recent armed attack against four members of UNOMIG in Sukhumi.

In this regard, we wish to emphasize the importance of the proposal of the Secretary-General concerning the deployment of self-protection units. Unfortunately, this question has turned into a subject of endless discussion. Indeed, it is unclear how the deployment of a self-protection unit would contradict the interests of any of the parties to the conflict or any other State, when this step is intended only to facilitate UNOMIG's intensive monitoring and would contribute to peace in the region.

While categorically condemning terrorist acts, regardless of the motives or where these acts might come from, we support the creation of joint investigative teams with clearly defined mandates of action.

The turn of events in Abkhazia, Georgia, has shown that some important aspects should be touched upon. First among these is the development of economic programmes of post-conflict peace-building to promote the peace process. We already have an example of the successful implementation of such an approach in the settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. The implementation of the economic programme in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has brought about the realization of a number of important projects for the reconstruction of the social and economic infrastructure in the conflict zone and, most importantly, has activated the mechanism of the return of refugees to their homes. Recently, we have embarked upon the implementation of the subsequent stage of the programme, which has been financed by the European Union.

Secondly, for the success of the peace process, we deem it necessary to formulate and effectively implement confidence-building measures between the parties to the conflict. To this end, and for the implementation of the measures formulated and the coordination of work in this direction, we believe it would be reasonable to actively engage the joint United Nations-Organization for Security

and Cooperation in Europe Human Rights Office in Sukhumi.

The third aspect is the grave humanitarian situation existing in internal conflicts, such as the one in Abkhazia, Georgia. I refer to the fate of hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons. We regret that the rights of the internally displaced persons are not protected by an international act.

President Shevardnadze has called upon the world community to mark 1998, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by elaborating a comprehensive plan for the creation of an effective international mechanism for the protection of the rights of internally displaced persons throughout the world, including their political rights, the right to protect their property and the right to return to their homes. In this regard, we actively support the proposal of the Secretary-General concerning the creation of an organizational structure for the protection of the rights of displaced persons.

When discussing the creation of a global model of security for the twenty-first century, we have to admit that the post-confrontational world is not yet secure, and the problem of separatism is not the only threat against which we have to consolidate our efforts.

We cannot but express our concern over the expansion of the zone of nuclear proliferation. The nuclear tests in South Asia have clearly made this threat far more ominous. Therefore, we call upon all States to display goodwill and a commitment to peace, and to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Efforts to quell the hotbeds of the so-called local conflicts have so far been unsuccessful. Georgia is deeply concerned at the developments in Kosovo, and especially in the north Caucasus region, namely, in Chechnya, Dagestan and across the border of North Ossetia and Ingushetia.

Terrorism, with all its bloody manifestations, poses a threat both to the region and to the world as a whole. Unfortunately, Georgia has also had its fair share of terrorism. The assassination attempt against the President of Georgia was aimed at the destabilization of the country and of the entire region. These and the recent terrorist acts against the United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania require an intensification in the fight against terrorism. Therefore, we must actively support any efforts to do away with this evil.

As we usher in the next millennium, it is impossible not to touch upon the problems of economic development and economic security. The process of economic globalization raises the question of a new role for the United Nations as a universal institution which would effectively contribute to the development of national economies and ensure economic security at both the regional and the global level.

All this is especially urgent for the post-Communist countries with economies in transition. Since restoring its statehood in 1991, Georgia has been on a difficult road, having gone from chaos to stability and from total economic collapse to development. This became possible through democratic change and economic reforms.

We have come to believe that the successful transition of the newly independent States to the market economy depends entirely on their integration into the international economic system through regional and interregional cooperation. A clear example of the implementation of a large-scale programme of economic cooperation is the revival of historic Silk Road. The Summit of the Transport Corridor: Europe-Caucasia-Asia (TRACECA) member States, held recently at Baku, Azerbaijan, emphasized that the idea of an alternative roadway for the Central Asian region through the south Caucasian corridor has already turned into a significant system stretching across the whole Euro-Asian continent.

The economic cooperation of the Black Sea basin countries is also very important. This area was recently transformed into a regional economic organization, having impressive potential and far-reaching plans.

In the course of the formation of a new world order, the main responsibility for international peace and security rests with the United Nations. An important step would be the reform of the Security Council in accordance with the new geopolitical realities. In this regard, we reiterate our position concerning the inclusion of Germany and Japan among the permanent members of the Council. We also support the increase in the number of non-permanent seats, providing one for the States of the Eastern European region. We also advocate more transparency in the work of the Security Council, including participation in its closed meetings by those non-member States whose problems happen to be the subject of the Council's discussions.

We are aware of the importance the United Nations attaches to the timely contributions of its Member States. In this regard, despite its economic constraints, Georgia will do everything in its capacity to cover its indebtedness to the Organization.

Special attention should be accorded to the further development of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

We believe that the time has come to further develop and institutionalize the system of standby arrangements. The creation of the Multinational United Nations Standby Forces High-Readiness Brigade can play an important role in preserving the peace. The same is true of the establishment of a well-equipped headquarters from which to identify potential hotbeds of tension.

Georgia has always advocated the establishment of an International Criminal Court and actively participated in the Rome Conference. We believe that the establishment of this permanent jurisdictional body will ensure that gross violations of human rights and crimes against humanity no longer go unpunished.

Like many previous speakers, in my statement I have resorted to such expressions as "new challenges" and "new threats" in the post-confrontational world. But at the same time, the new era opens before us new and boundless horizons and creates new opportunities in the formation of a new world order. We believe that only by joint efforts and common political will can we cope with these challenges and realize all these opportunities.

The Acting President: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Alisher Vohidov.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me first of all to offer my sincere congratulations to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session and to wish him every success in this important task. I am confident that his long experience and abilities will contribute to the successful outcome of the current session of the General Assembly. I should also like to express our appreciation to the previous President of the General Assembly, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his energetic and professional work.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw the Assembly's attention to the problems that are of greatest concern to the States of our region.

The President returned to the Chair.

The international community fully recognizes the danger of recent developments in Afghanistan, South Asia and the Republic of Tajikistan. There is an enormous potential for conflict in this subregion today. The threat that the Afghan conflict may explode and spread to neighbouring States remains a real one. Uzbekistan has repeatedly appealed to the international community from this rostrum for assistance in resolving the Afghan problem.

This goal should be served, *inter alia*, by our initiative to impose an arms embargo on Afghanistan. The appeal to halt deliveries of weaponry and *matériel* to all parties to the conflict has been reflected in numerous Security Council resolutions and awaits the creation of an effective mechanism within the United Nations so that it can be implemented. The Six Plus Two group, with the participation of Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, as well as the United States and the Russian Federation, which was established as a result of a proposal by Uzbekistan, is today, in our opinion, the only effective international mechanism within the United Nations capable of launching the peace process. Its task is not to condemn the warring factions, to criticize them or to support one of them against the others. We are united by a common goal, which is to find a path to stability, security and peace.

A great deal of interest is now focused on energy projects and transport communications in the region. However, the implementation of these projects should not cause confrontation, but should on the contrary promote stability and the development of mutually beneficial cooperation between the States of the region. Given the ongoing hostilities in Afghanistan, the importance of the Six Plus Two group as a full-fledged negotiating instrument is growing. Within that framework — and with the cooperation of the inter-Afghan forces — it is possible not merely to elaborate the terms of reconciliation but also the necessary measures to restore statehood to that country and bring about its economic revival. In that connection, we fully support the decisions of the meeting of the Six Plus Two group held at the level of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, which took place on 21 September of this year in New York. We also commend the efforts of the Special Envoy of the

Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi.

Recent developments in Afghanistan have confirmed that one of the most important conditions for the restoration of peace in the Islamic State of Afghanistan is the achievement of consensus at the regional level and the elaboration, under the aegis of the United Nations, of a single position to be taken by the countries that have an influence on events in that country. Cooperation with the Afghan factions in order to reach a speedy settlement of the Afghan conflict is the ultimate goal of the proposed on-site meeting of the Six Plus Two group in Tashkent. We hope for further support for this proposal from interested States and the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

The problems that affect the vital interests of Uzbekistan, in particular the establishment of lasting peace in Tajikistan, the cessation of war in Afghanistan, the imposition of an arms embargo on the Afghan zone of conflict, the establishment of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, the construction of transport communications and the revival of Aral Sea are all part of global international processes that are under way and could be implemented under the aegis of the United Nations.

I believe that the events of the last decade have convinced everyone that no State can, on its own, resolve transnational security problems such as illicit drug-trafficking, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of their components.

The Government of Uzbekistan welcomes the efforts of the United Nations to counter the spread of narcotic drugs and to implement the Political Declaration adopted at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, held in New York in June 1998. Today, in some European countries, up to 90 per cent of the narcotic drugs consumed originate in Afghanistan. The international community is aware of the need to take coordinated action to counter illegal trafficking in narcotic substances and to implement the principles of international cooperation in this area on the basis of mutual assistance and solidarity. However, we believe that these principles should also reflect specific regional aspects. In particular, once again we call for the elaboration of special programmes to plan for concrete, joint action by the States of Central Asia and the European Union.

Unfortunately, terrorist acts have become a common occurrence in many countries. Existing international mechanisms to fight terrorism, including political isolation, economic sanctions and direct military intervention, are not achieving results. We should have no illusions about this phenomenon. Today we need coordinated and targeted action by the entire international community. In that connection, we welcome discussion of one of the most complex issues in international law: the possibility of and need for a new approach to the problem of terrorism. The importance of resolving this whole set of problems is obvious.

In this connection, Uzbekistan has taken the initiative to establish within the framework of the United Nations a commission for the prevention of terrorist activities and for fighting international terrorism. The main task of such a commission would be to formulate recommendations on questions relating to the fight against international terrorism. Making use of legal norms, the United Nations could prosecute the organizers and perpetrators of terrorist acts. If Member States support this initiative, Uzbekistan will take an active part in bringing it to fruition.

Uzbekistan has consistently taken steps to ensure peace and strengthen regional security. One of these is Uzbekistan's initiative to establish a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. Considerable progress has already been made to implement this idea. Allow me to cite the closing statement of the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko:

> "In a decision designed to further promote the regime of nuclear nonproliferation, the Assembly adopted a consensus resolution supporting the initiative to establish one more nuclear-weapon-free zone, in Central Asia. The significance of that step became even more apparent in the light of the recent nuclear tests in southern Asia". (*A/52/PV.92*)

Here, let me express our special gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for their well-informed and strong support of this initiative.

When considering potential threats to national security, we ought today to give special attention to problems of ecological security and environmental protection. It is common knowledge that the drying up of the Aral Sea has caused many complex ecological, socio-economic and demographic problems, whose origins and gravity are international, even global. The Aral crisis is

one of the most serious of the world's ecological and humanitarian disasters. It has had a direct impact on more than 35 million people who live in the Aral Sea basin.

A number of decisions have been adopted at international and regional meetings on the problem of the Aral Sea. But these have not been backed up by practical action. We are obliged to say that the idea is gaining ground in the international community that the Aral crisis can be contained through humanitarian operations. That is not the case. This is an extraordinary ecological problem that requires the establishment within the United Nations system of a regional commission on the ecology of Aral Sea. This initiative is justified by the need to formulate and implement a specific long-term strategy and programme for resolving the Aral crisis on the basis of the principles of sustainable development, maintaining the standard of living of the people of the region, and ensuring a decent life for future generations.

Modern Uzbekistan is in the process of establishing a State based on the rule of law, a civil society and an effective, socially oriented market economy. It has an acute need for the experience and know-how of international bodies. At the same time, our republic is devoting great attention to the question of recruiting Uzbek experts for the activities of a variety of United Nations bodies. Let me stress that the level of training and knowledge of Uzbek specialists is fully in keeping with the requirements for recruitment to the bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations system. I am confident that specialists from Uzbekistan can and should contribute to the work of international organizations.

In conclusion, I should like to stress in particular that our relationship with the United Nations is intended not only to obtain assistance and support, but primarily to enable us to play our full part in the successful implementation of the purposes and principles of the United Nations and to give fresh content to the activities of the Organization.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Domingos Augusto Ferreira, Chairman of the delegation of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Ferreira (Sao Tome and Principe): On behalf of the people and the Government of Sao Tome and Principe, and on my own account, I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, and wish you success in carrying out your duties.

On the occasion of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe would like to join with all other countries of the world in advocating the cause of development, peace and liberty for all the world's people. We want also to state our deep concern at the grave problems which affect mankind and which pose a threat to the world.

We are one year away from the beginning of a new millennium, and it is with sadness that we observe a world deeply divided between North and South, rich and poor, and developed and underdeveloped countries.

The African continent continues its process of healing and its struggle towards development. In recent decades many countries of our continent have become independent and democratic, and are ready for the open market. Some of them have experienced significant economic growth. Economic reforms and democracy have made them favourable ground for development.

However, against this background, many African countries have become poorer. Bad management and various types of crisis have given these countries very few opportunities for development. In 1996, 240 million Africans were living on less than one dollar per day. Africa's share of international trade was only 2 per cent, and the continent received 2 per cent of foreign investment. Poverty is increasing, and political instability is creating violent conflicts which are very difficult to control.

With deep sadness, we observe too many armed conflicts, such as those in Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, the Great Lakes region, Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea and so on. Too many lives have been lost; too much economic infrastructure and too many homes have been destroyed; too many refugees have been created. That is the result of armed conflicts in our continent.

This situation merits the attention of all in order to prevent armed conflicts, by creating an environment for dialogue and reconciliation based on democratic principles, good governance and respect for the human rights of minorities.

The situation in Guinea-Bissau requires the special attention of the international community in order to promote dialogue between all the parties in conflict. We participated in negotiations as a member of the

Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, together with the Southern African Development Community, and our mediation resulted in a ceasefire. We appeal to both parties to create a good environment to secure peace and tranquillity and restore the normal functioning of democratic institutions and respect for the Constitution.

Angola is also our concern. We call on the international community to avoid another war in that country. We also appeal to UNITA and to the Government of National Unity and Reconciliation, of which UNITA is a part, to fulfil all the objectives of the Lusaka Protocol and work for peace and development.

The situation in Central Africa and the Great Lakes region is for us the most worrying in our continent. I do not want to exaggerate, but I can say that this subregion is in flames which can spread into other countries. Our desire is to work together with the international community and all countries in the subregion to seek a solution. Despite all the approaches already made to end the conflict peacefully, we cannot remain inactive while the conflict is widening, with catastrophic consequences. The international community must continue to work for peace to stop the suffering of innocent people.

Besides the conflicts on the African continent, there are others, such as that in East Timor. The East Timorese people have been suffering under foreign occupation. They are fighting for self-determination, the right to freely choose their own destiny, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. If we deny them those rights, we contradict the principles of our Organization. Against this background, we reaffirm our support for the Maubere people in their struggle for self-determination. We appeal to the United Nations and the international community to continue supporting the negotiations to reach a peaceful end of the conflict.

The world is facing serious environmental problems. The development of programmes to protect our planet must be a priority, and we must work together to avoid behaviour that damages the environment by creating pollution, land degradation and destruction in general. We need to follow the Rio Declaration if we want a safe environment and sound development. We have to pay special attention to the problems of desertification, water pollution, deforestation and biological diversity.

I would like to call attention to resolution 2758 (XXVI), adopted in 1971, which denied over 21.8 million people their right to international representation and totally contravenes the principle of universality, consecrated in the Charter. The admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan as one of our own would not pose a challenge to any of the existing Members, and the peaceful coexistence of the two sides in this Organization would be a catalyst to end one of the largest and most enduring sources of instability in Asia. Taking into consideration this and the changes that have taken place in international relations, we call on the General Assembly to review resolution 2758 (XXVI).

Fifty-three years after the United Nations was founded, I would like once again to emphasize and praise the positive contribution this Organization has made to freedom, development and peace. The Organization faces more and more challenges, and it is necessary and convenient to proceed with reform of the system to make it capable of responding to the demands upon it. The reform must also include the Security Council; it is time to reform its structure to provide a better geographical representation.

It is our understanding that a more democratic, efficient and less bureaucratic United Nations may better shoulder its obligations and carry out its duties, in order to guarantee progress and universal peace.

The struggle against organized crime, drugs, money laundering and international terrorism must be one of the priorities of the United Nations and of all countries. Everybody must contribute to fighting these problems and their catastrophic consequences.

My country is facing a difficult moment in its history. The economy of Sao Tome and Principe has been undergoing deep changes. Statistical data show that there is a significant improvement. It seems that inflation has slowed; there is an improvement in the fiscal system and the value of the national currency has risen.

The Government has been making efforts in order to achieve satisfactory results in the area of economic development and reducing poverty. One of our concerns is related to the problem of our high foreign debt, estimated at nearly $270 million and which is 54 times greater than the value of our exports. Despite all the efforts that have been made, these numbers are still tragic. It is essential for Sao Tome and Principe to benefit from having its foreign debt forgiven. It is very important for us to be able to participate in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative.

In closing, I would like to thank the United Nations and its specialized agencies for the support given to my country.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

I would like to remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Yimer (Ethiopia): This morning the Assembly listened to a statement by the Foreign Minister of Eritrea containing the usual litany of distortions and obfuscations regarding the current crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea. We characterize them as the usual litany because they represent the futile attempts that the Eritrean Government makes in various forums to cover up its aggression against Ethiopia and the occupation of our territory by force.

Since by virtue of the continued occupation of Ethiopian territory by Eritrea the aggression against Ethiopia is continuing, the Eritrean leadership is trying to shed the stigma of aggressor by trying to divert the attention of the international community from the real issue: blatant aggression by one State against another, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of the basic norms and principles of international law.

In essence, this is not at all surprising, since that is how aggressors always behave. The represent themselves as victims. But it is not that easy to deceive international opinion for long, because the facts speak for themselves. However much they may try to portray the crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea as a border dispute, it is incontrovertible that the crisis stems from the aggression committed by Eritrea against Ethiopia on 12 May 1998. No one, except possibly the Eritrean leadership itself, believes otherwise, and they know it.

In his statement, the Eritrean Foreign Minister claims that his country believes that all inter-State disputes should be settled by peaceful means and without the use of force, and that this has always underscored his country's relations with its neighbours. This has never been valid over the past seven years. There have been four victims, in effect all of Eritrea's neighbours, including, most recently, Ethiopia, which have been the victims of Eritrea's aggressive attitude over the past seven years of its existence as a State.

In view of this stark fact, it is the height of arrogance and an insult to the intelligence of the international community, in particular the victims of Eritrean aggression, to say that Eritrea is committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes between States. On the contrary, what Eritrea is committed to is the use of force for the settlement of disputes between States.

Secondly, the Minister stated that Eritrea was surprised and disturbed by the eruption of conflict with Ethiopia. Again, this is a peculiar form of surprise by an aggressor which has committed aggression following deliberate planning and preparation.

Thirdly, the Eritrean Foreign Minister claims that the attack by Ethiopia against Eritrea in the Badma region on 6 May is the root cause of the dispute. This is a most surprising claim in view of the fact that the basic element of the proposal by the facilitators — the United States and Rwanda — and the specific initial requirement for the proposal to be set in motion is that Eritrean troops should leave Ethiopian territory and be redeployed to the position they held before 6 May 1998, and that Ethiopian civil administration should first be restored to the area.

No third party has ever even hinted that Ethiopia has attacked Eritrea at any time. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) Committee of Ambassadors, in its report which was presented to the two Governments, has, over and above stating clearly that is has reached the conclusion that Badma and its environs were under Ethiopian administration before 12 May 1998, also stated that what happened between 6 and 12 May 1998 constituted a fundamental element of the crisis.

Fourthly, the Eritrean Minister in his statement repeatedly denied that Eritrean troops had crossed internationally recognized borders between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In this assertion he is trying to deny the undeniable: that Eritrean troops crossed the international boundary between Ethiopia, and that it has been established by third parties — by the facilitators, when they called for the deployment of Eritrean troops to the position they held before 6 May 1998; by the OAU Summit, in supporting the facilitators' proposal and calling for its implementation; by the Security Council, in supporting the OAU decision; and by the OAU Committee of Ambassadors — that Badma and its

environs, now under Eritrean forcible occupation, were under Ethiopian administration before 12 May 1998.

Fifthly, the Eritrean Minister accuses Ethiopia of portraying Eritrea as a warmongering nation. But its behaviour has given them that identity, not any propaganda campaign by Ethiopia. No other characterization would be suitable to Eritrea's belligerent attitude towards its neighbours over the past several years. The claims that Ethiopia has designs on the Eritrean port of Assab is such an unadulterated fabrication that we will not dignify it by any reply.

Sixthly, the Eritrean Minister has made the claim that Ethiopia has rejected all overtures by third parties for the peaceful resolution of the dispute. In this connection, the third parties will be even more surprised than the Ethiopia Government by this twisting of the truth. It is common knowledge that at every step of the way, Ethiopia has officially and formally accepted third-party proposals — such as those of the facilitators, the United States and Rwanda; the decision of the OAU; and the resolution of the Security Council — while Eritrea resorted to its usual prevarication, amounting to a rejection of the proposals.

With regard to the humanitarian consequences of Eritrean aggression against Ethiopia, that aggression has resulted in the displacement of over 200,000 Ethiopians from the areas adjoining the Ethiopian territory invaded by Eritrea. Those remaining under Eritrean occupation are suffering under the inhuman treatment of the Eritrean regime, ranging from outright physical torture to the forcible imposition of Eritrean nationality on pain of losing the right to farm their plots of land. There was, of course, the bombardment with napalm by the Eritrean air force of civilian targets, including schools, in broad daylight at Mekele and Adigrat towns in northern Ethiopia, which was seen by people throughout the world.

Thousands of Ethiopians in Eritrea are still suffering under the cruel treatment of the Eritrean Government, prevented from returning home and denied all means of livelihood. They are in effect hostages in the hands of the Eritrean Government. Those who have money to return home recount harrowing stories about the treatment of their compatriots remaining in Eritrea. The Eritrean Government has so far expelled 24,000 Ethiopians under inhuman conditions.

On its part, the Ethiopia Government has never denied that it has asked those Eritreans in Ethiopia who pose national security risks to Ethiopia to leave the country. In this connection, we have repeatedly assured the international community that the human rights of the individuals concerned are fully respected and their rights to their properties are not in any way affected.

Let me reiterate what our Foreign Minister told this body only yesterday: that the cause of the current crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea lies, among other things, in the Eritrean leadership's propensity for aggression against Eritrea's neighbours, in particular at the whim of a dictator. As long as this state of mind is there, one cannot see how a peaceful resolution of the crisis, which we even at this moment fervently wish for and seek, can be reality. Yet the Eritrean Minister has the temerity to suggest peaceful resolution without any preconditions, with the cessation of hostilities and a ceasefire. He has in fact shrouded the nefarious act of rewarding aggression in seemingly innocuous concepts. One is not so naive as not to see through this Eritrean deception and duplicity.

For our part, we have made it clear in no uncertain terms, ever since the Eritrean aggression, that we are not prepared to go through such a charade.

Mr. Makonga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*interpretation from French*): Many delegations have denounced or deplored the aggression against my country. Most have urged a quick end to hostilities. Surprisingly, only the delegations of the aggressor countries did not want to acknowledge what they were doing. Some used security reasons to try to justify their acts, others used internal problems.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot say too often that Rwanda is not only the base for this aggression but that, for undisclosed reasons, it supports it. The internal problem that it continues to raise is merely a false alibi intended to cover up its abuses and its desire to annex part of our territory regarded as a natural grain-producing area.

Unfortunately, since the occupation of part of Kivus the situation has worsened to such an extent that meeting the subsistence needs of the local people is no longer assured. This is a genuine catastrophe.

Pillage, plunder, rape, deportation and harassment have become commonplace throughout the occupied territory where the invading troops are engaged in terrible acts that run counter to the humanism of which Africa would like to become the champion. As an example, the Rwandan invaders committed an odious

assassination during a religious service. One Rwandan soldier made a name for himself in Kasika by raping the pregnant wife of the traditional chief of the village, then ripping the foetus out of her womb and drinking its blood. How should we classify this act?

As the Assembly will have noted, the Rwandan invaders are not only committing every imaginable and unimaginable crime against peaceful Congolese civilians, but are bringing their tradition of ethnic hatred to my country. Even as I speak, in Bukavu they are hunting down Hutus.

The international community should know that many current Rwandan leaders — for example, the Minister for Foreign Affairs — lived peacefully in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for decades, taking part freely in country life. We did not kill or threaten these people; rather, we welcomed them and gave them refuge, not out of naivety, but because of basic humanism. And so what interest would the Democratic Republic of the Congo have now in persecuting the other Rwandans who live on our soil?

Rwanda says on the one hand that the situation now prevailing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is an internal problem; on the other hand, it claims the right to intervene at any moment in order to protect the Tutsi populations and at the same time to secure its borders.

On behalf of my Government, given the confusion deliberately fostered by Rwanda about this unjust war imposed on the Congo, I would like to say that there are no internal problems in my country; rather, an act of aggression is being committed against the Congolese State by neighbouring Rwanda and its ally, Uganda. What is now happening in Bukavu and Goma is nothing more than a result of blood lust, a thirst for vengeance, the Kigali leader's obstinate search for every sort of subterfuge to allow the establishment of ethnic supremacy.

The Congolese people have never had such desires. By nature they are very hospitable and will never lift a finger to harm those who seek refuge in their country.

The insecurity along the border between Congo and Rwanda is the work of the Rwandans alone. Since their country became independent they have been unable to live in ethnic harmony and have thus created an unnecessary tide of displaced persons and refugees. Unfortunately, their refusal to integrate has had unexpected consequences for the inhabitants of the villages along the border; furthermore, it is destabilizing Rwandan political institutions, a process made worse by periodic massacres, to the extent that the international community has had to establish an international criminal tribunal to put an end to this genocidal culture.

The insecurity now prevailing in the region can only be resolved if Rwanda agrees to democratize itself by restructuring and completely reorganizing its State organs.

This Assembly should know that one of the Congolese puppets placed in Goma by Kigali has admitted to the foreign press the presence there of some of the Rwanda Patriotic Army troops who perpetrated the aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Rwandans' denials have convinced no one. Therefore, there should be an end to attempts to make the international community believe that Rwanda is in no way involved in what is happening in the Congo and that it is just an internal matter. If this were so, how could the presence of Rwandan troops in Goma and Bukavu be justified? Their presence has been confirmed by local citizens, the select ministerial commission of the Southern African Development Community, the international media and independent sources cited in my statement on 23 September.

I do not want to dwell too long on this subject, but my delegation hopes that the Assembly will approve the addition of an agenda item on the matter, as proposed for the present session, and that a resolution condemning the aggression will be adopted.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Responding to the statement made this morning by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that — as the Deputy Prime Minister recognized in regard to the case he mentioned — the Government of Spain firmly rejects and unreservedly condemns all terrorist acts, wherever committed and whatever criminals may be responsible. This firm position of my Government was expressed most clearly a few days ago by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain at the 12th meeting, during the general debate, when he stated:

> "Terrorism constitutes a serious threat to domestic and international security, to the development and functioning of democratic

institutions throughout the world and to the exercise of human rights."

He then indicated our support for strengthening the machinery of international cooperation to combat this threat.

Mr. Menkerios (Eritrea): The Eritrean delegation has no interest in wasting the Assembly's valuable time by engaging in a useless polemic with a party that feels that hollow sophistry can make up for realities. We choose to present the facts on the questions of aggression; Ethiopia's forceful occupation of our land; its criminal violations of the human rights of Eritreans and of Ethiopians of Eritrean origin resident in Ethiopia; the expulsions; the confiscation of property and so forth; and Eritrea's attempts to achieve a peaceful solution. These attempts have been futile because of the Ethiopian Government's total rejection of all proposals presented by Eritrea and its sticking to its ultimatum demanding Eritrean withdrawal from disputed lands.

Mr. Ubalijoro (Rwanda): I did not wish to take the floor, but having heard the reply of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo I wish to put on record the following:

The statement made this afternoon by my Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Mr. Anastase Gasana, was based on pure and concrete facts. The purpose of my Minister's statement was to describe a tragic and worrisome situation on the ground in our region. For the umpteenth time, the international community has been alerted.

Although I was shocked and dismayed by the statement of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I will not waste the Assembly's time by replying to his baseless allegations and fabrications. But I would like to state that I am glad that he was not in a position to refute or deny the content of my Minister's statement when he referred to the incitation to ethnic hatred and genocide by the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities. Indeed, my Minister used quotations simply because he was making reference to factual events that have generated untold tragedy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In order to demonstrate how we attach the utmost importance to facts, I wish to read an excerpt from an article contained in today's *International Herald Tribune*, entitled "The Most Dangerous Thing in Kinshasa Is to Be, or Resemble, a Tutsi".

It reads:

> "Kinshasa television broadcast interviews with residents vowing to throw Tutsi out of the city. An official radio station in the eastern town of Bunia on Aug. 8 urged Congolese to attack Tutsi, whom it described physically: 'Dear listeners! ... Open your eyes wide. Those of you who live along the road, jump on the people with long noses, who are tall and slim and want to dominate us.'
>
> "Mr. Kabila, who lacks an effective army, declared Aug. 25 that all Congolese should 'take up arms, even traditional weapons — bows and arrows, spears and other things' to crush the enemy 'because otherwise we are going to become the slaves of these Tutsi people.'
>
> "Congo's most prominent human rights group — the African Association for Defense of Human Rights, which operates clandestinely since the government banned it in April — said the government 'abusively exploited patriotic feelings to incite the population to blind acts of violence against anyone suspected of being a rebel, a Tutsi or connected even remotely with the rebellion.'"

On this note, I wish to conclude and leave members to assess the genocidal character of the Kabila regime.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): For the record, my delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the references to East Timor made by the Chargé d'affaires of Sao Tome and Principe in the General Assembly in his statement this afternoon.

Indonesia's principled position regarding the decolonization of East Timor is clear. The historical and irrefutable fact is that the East Timorese people have already democratically exercised their right to self-determination. This they did by choosing independence through integration with the Republic of Indonesia in accordance with resolution 1514 (XV) and Principles VI, VIII and IX of resolution 1541 (XV), as further confirmed by the relevant provisions of resolution 2625

(XXV). The United Nations was kept fully informed of every step in this process.

Indonesia has consistently demonstrated its good faith and sincerity to cooperate with the efforts of the office of the Secretary-General and engage in a tripartite dialogue with Portugal, held under the auspices of the Secretary-General since 1982, in the search for a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor. Towards this end, Indonesia has proposed to grant a special status to East Timor with wide-ranging autonomy in the context, and as part, of a settlement, and has expressed its readiness to negotiate the substantive elements of this proposal.

This proposal reflects the reaffirmation of Indonesia's sincere commitment to resolving the issue of East Timor. Hence, as noted in the Secretary-General's progress report (A/53/349) on the question of East Timor dated 10 September 1998, within the context of a tripartite dialogue the negotiations have moved in a new direction recently, bringing new promise for an early settlement of the problem. It is our expectation that this progress will be sustained.

It is therefore a source of profound regret that the representative of Sao Tome and Principe chose, unlike other delegations that have spoken on the subject, to ignore these irrefutable facts and spoke against the positive atmosphere which has recently been created.

Finally, Indonesia remains fully committed to the people of East Timor and to supporting them in their hopes and aspirations to build a better and more stable future for their children and themselves as Indonesian citizens.

Mr. Yimer (Ethiopia): The fact that the Eritrean delegation has not chosen to waste the Assembly's time in trying to reply to my statement is to be appreciated. Accordingly, I stand by my earlier statement.

Mr. Makonga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*interpretation from French*): I just want to say one word to my young brother, the representative of Rwanda. It is difficult for honest people of integrity to understand the lies or explain the hallucinations of Rwandan neighbours who would besiege the Democratic Republic of the Congo and make it an integral part of their territory. I do not want to get into a futile argument with him. Let Rwanda withdraw from the Democratic Republic of the Congo instead of persisting in its nonsensical actions, which will not pay off in the long run. The truth is more rewarding than a lie.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): No other delegations wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Before closing the meeting, I would like, as President to make a statement.

With the comments of the last speaker, the general debate at the fifty-third session has drawn to a close. I believe that all representatives will agree that the statements we have heard over the past two weeks have been extremely interesting and have confirmed that although this exercise has been repeated annually for more than five decades it has by no means become routine, due to the growing dynamism of the subjects discussed.

It is therefore impossible for our Governments to maintain a static vision of the complex international realities considered in all their dimensions. The perception, recognition and better understanding of these new realities, as well as existing ones, are such as to ensure that the content of our debates is constantly renewed and that they provide a process of mutual enrichment, from which we all benefit. I must therefore thank all those who have participated.

Personally, I believe that this debate has provided us with a unique and invaluable opportunity to see how the Governments of Member States view the world in these final years of the century; what problems, in the view of their leaders, have an impact on the peace, security and prosperity of peoples; and what direction the international community should take in order to address and resolve these issues.

This time, 26 heads of State, one Vice-President, one Crown Prince, 15 Prime Ministers, 14 Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers for Foreign Affairs, 105 Foreign Ministers, six Ministers from other departments or secretariats, 11 heads of delegations and one Observer — in total, 180 speakers — took part in the debate. Thus, the Assembly received an exhaustive overview of the situation. It is, of course, not my intention at this time, nor would it be within my power, to draw any conclusions. That is not my responsibility and this is not the time to do so. However, I should at least like to share some thoughts which the statements made over the past two weeks have brought to mind.

In nearly every statement made during the debate that has concluded this afternoon, we find expressed —

explicitly or implicitly, emphatically and less so — a concern among Governments over the profound economic inequalities between, on the one hand, the vast sectors of humanity mired in poverty or an insufficiency of resources and, on the other, the minority living in prosperity and abundance. It is within that context that many statements revealed and stressed the concern that the rapid and inexorable process of globalization, which is reaching into all aspects of international relations, may also be the natural result of scientific and technological development. There is mounting interest in securing a deeper understanding of the nature of the process so that the international community can prepare itself to manage its effects, work on its causes and ensure that the globalization of the economy does not benefit a mere few while harming the weakest and most vulnerable.

We have heard calls for a definition of new rules to regulate this contemporary financial phenomenon, which has a natural effect on commercial trade, and to promote a re-examination, revision and possibly an adjustment of the existing structures of the financial system that emerged from the Bretton Woods agreements. Those structures date back to over 50 years ago — when, as was recalled by one head of State, there were no computers — and the agreements do not seem to meet present needs.

To be fair, however, it is also useful to recognize, as if that were not enough, that the phenomenon of globalization produces assets and liabilities. While it inspires feelings of unease and distrust among some, it appears to have heightened the need for us to work together. Global problems call for a global response. That inescapable truth is now, more than ever before, clearly and urgently understood, as was demonstrated by the convening of a high-level dialogue on globalization in this Hall just a few days ago.

On a different level, the general debate has enabled us to review situations which threaten or effectively undermine international peace and security in various regions of the world: Africa, Asia and Europe. Unfortunately, such situations are many and painful; they involve dozens of countries and millions of people, leaving in their wake death, destruction and refugees ousted from their homes. I sensed in a number of statements a feeling of frustration, if not powerlessness, at the Organization's limited ability — due to the scant resources at its disposal — to take the necessary preventive action to anticipate these actions and events, much less to cope after the fact with their impact and repercussions. In any case, we must not lose sight of the fact that there is renewed confidence, expressed in most statements, that the United Nations should pursue its efforts.

The Organization's difficulties in taking rapid, effective action in some cases to avoid breaches of the peace or to restore peace inevitably compel us to focus on conflict-prevention mechanisms. Many delegations referred to the need to strengthen the mechanisms that allow the United Nations to play its preventive role more effectively.

A few days from now, the General Assembly will have an opportunity to make a valuable contribution in this regard when it considers the topic of the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, on which the Secretary-General has produced an excellent report, for which I thank him.

The peoples of several regions of Africa are currently enduring unspeakable privations as a result, in some cases, of natural disaster and, in others, of serious internal and inter-State conflicts. Sometimes, both phenomena are at cause. It is clear from all the statements made in the general debate that the Assembly wishes to devote special and priority attention to the situation in Africa. I hope that the Assembly will be able to consider the issue in depth on a priority basis and that it will succeed in determining how the United Nations might provide the sister African countries with rapid, effective assistance in overcoming these extreme situations, which have touched us all.

This debate has also shown that the international community is becoming increasingly impatient and sometimes dissatisfied with the lack of progress in the search for solutions to other conflicts whose prolongation poses a serious threat to peace and security. Some of these conflicts are included in our agenda and I hope that we will be able to adopt targeted, substantive and meaningful resolutions on them that can be effectively implemented.

In this regard, we have seen some encouraging signs. I am referring in particular to the statements made by the representatives of Israel and Palestine in the course of the general debate confirming their desire to conclude the peace process and their willingness to resume negotiations that will lead to a positive conclusion of this long-standing conflict.

The debate has inevitably revealed that there is still profound, widespread concern at the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Numerous references were made to the events of this year that proved that this concern was fully justified. That has prompted many representatives to urge countries that have not yet done so to join non-proliferation regimes. Accordingly, we must find the ways to promote strengthening of the institutional legal framework needed to put an end to the arms race, the proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear testing.

Fortunately, in the course of the debate we also received encouraging signals from countries deeply involved in that matter, by way of their pledges to accede to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In this context, I must mention the imminent entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We must vigorously promote universal accession to the Convention in order to ensure the complete elimination of those lethal, cowardly and impersonal devices.

The problem of terrorism has been another of the topics most singled out by speakers. On the basis of the numerous references made to the issue in the general debate, it can easily be concluded that Governments hope that the United Nations will deepen and continue the battle against terrorism by expanding the legal framework combating and suppressing it. It is also hoped that progress will be made in achieving the priority goal of reducing organized crime, particularly illicit drug-trafficking and the more subtle forms of international crime, such as the illicit trafficking in persons. I trust that we can reach agreements on these topics that will show the desire to make genuine progress in our work, and that our work will have a direct relationship with those on whose behalf it is done.

The participants in the general debate have borne in mind and have rightly recalled that this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is undoubtedly an occasion worth commemorating. It is also an occasion for substantive reaffirmation, for renewing a commitment that does not end with a mere instrument but extends to the real conduct of those who govern and those who are governed. The internationalization of the protection and guarantees of human rights is undoubtedly an ongoing process that in recent years has reached a significant stage, even a sort of culmination in the establishment of standing international tribunals for the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of grave human rights violations and other serious crimes.

These circumstances, however, cannot conceal the fact that vast segments of humanity continue to suffer violations of their rights. It is the duty of our Organization, and this Assembly in particular, to continue the effort to complete the institutional legal framework on which the system of protection of these rights is based. The adoption of the draft declaration on human rights defenders, which we hope will be by consensus, will be the best tribute that the Assembly could offer on the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights.

We also have the realistic hope that we can adopt significant decisions on the strengthening of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, on the protection of the rights of women and children, who are very often the most vulnerable sectors of the population, and especially on children in armed conflicts.

Throughout the debate many references have been made to the United Nations as being the most appropriate, though not only, tool for confronting these and other problems and challenges. It is clearly evident, however, that this tool, not only because of the passage of time but also because of the transformation of the international community as a whole, must be refined and honed in order to adapt it to new times, new expectations and new demands of the international community.

Thus, the topic of the reform of United Nations procedures of the Charter has been a constant and recurring theme of the statements we have heard. We have all been made more aware of the difficulties involved in carrying out an immediate, deep-going transformation. This will be possible only if preceded by a careful intellectual process imbued with deep political thought; only if carried out with care in and a spirit of cooperation; only if time is not the deciding factor, but a factor that must be taken into consideration in keeping with the urgency of the need, the strength of the solution and the necessary worldwide scope. Therefore, I trust that when the moment comes to resume negotiations, we will be able, with the participation of all at this fifty-third session, to reach basic agreements leading to a definitive solution. We know it will not be easy, but precisely for that reason we must not delay.

Naturally, efforts to strengthen the functioning and institutional structure of the Organization to increase its efficiency will be futile if its economic situation remains permanently precarious, if it is always in financial crisis. This debate has again shown that the Organization will be

unable to accomplish its tasks fully if it does not receive the necessary economic resources.

It is impossible in these brief remarks to reflect the richness of ideas and the profundity of the debate and initiatives presented during the general debate.

I have allowed myself to make these brief and necessarily incomplete summaries, it is to remind the Assembly that the task before us in the coming weeks is a formidable one, a considerable responsibility that must be added to our individual responsibilities. I trust that intelligence, dedication and our collective spirit of responsibility will make this task possible. I have been convinced, from the moment I assumed the presidency of the General Assembly at this fifty-third session, that there exists in the General Assembly a spirit of progress, a constructive spirit; even amid the misunderstandings and the diversity, there exists an urgent will to overcome differences and disagreements. We must not allow ourselves to be the ones who fail to meet expectations. Let us work so that our final statement at the close of the fifty-third session will not be a confession of frustration but an encouraging voice of hope.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 9?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.